

Call to save rock art

COTTESLOE MLA Colin Barnett has called on the State to protect rock art at the Burrup Peninsula.

Mr Barnett told Parliament the peninsula had the world's biggest concentration of rock art.

He said the art had been dated at between 6000 to 18,000 years old and there were at least 300,000 engravings and carvings.

"This is a great responsibility on this Parliament and on the people of Western Australia," he said.

Mr Barnett said thousands of carvings were destroyed by industrial development at the peninsula, which has a port and mining interests.

Mr Barnett told Parliament that during the development of the North-West Shelf project in the early 1980s, 2000 boulders with carvings on them were removed from the construction site and stored with the WA Museum.

"Tragically, the storage was inappropriate and those carvings are continuing to suffer damage," Mr Barnett said.

"I do not blame previous governments, nor do I blame the companies involved. Work needs to be done to give certainty to existing industry and to both a medium and long-term horizon for future investment – that is the responsibility that we, as a parliament, should be addressing."

Mr Barnett said the rock art was of world significance and needed to be managed without it becoming a barrier to industrial development.

"It is a major heritage issue for this State and it is one for which this Parliament must assume responsibility for preserving, protecting and making it possibly available for people to see and enjoy on of the world's truly great and ancient heritage sites," he said.