

Under threat: Valuable rock art in the Burrup Peninsula is being destroyed by industry. Picture: Sharon Smith

World-class rock art in danger
RONAN O'CONNELL

The world's most significant collection of rock art is being gradually destroyed by industry in WA's North-West, experts claim.

The claim came from rock art specialists who attended the Dampier Rock Art Precinct Forum at the State Library Theatre in Perth.

Australian Rock Art Research Association president Ken Mulvaney called for a halt to industrial development in the precinct, which has both the highest density and the greatest diversity of rock carvings in the world.

Some of the rock art is believed to be up to 20,000 years old making it more than four times older than Stonehenge at about 4500 years.

According to the National Trust of Australia., the Burrup Peninsula alone houses about one million pieces of rock art, with up to 10,000 of those already destroyed by development in the resource rich region.

"Governments have known for years about the heritage value of the rock art in this area yet they have not protected it," Mr Mulvaney said.

"Industry can be relocated but cultural heritage simply cannot."

Robert Bednarik, head of the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations, hailed the region's collection of rock art as the most important in the world.

"It is a hugely significant area in regards to rock art and it is crucial that it is preserved for generations to come," Mr Bednarik said.