

Burrup Aboriginal art protected

AAP

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THE WA Government has announced a plan to protect about 60 per cent of the Burrup Peninsula and preserve its Aboriginal art heritage.

Environment Minister Mark McGowan said the plan focussed on the proposed freehold Aboriginal lands that would form the Burrup Peninsula Conservation Reserve.

"Under the plan, the land will be jointly managed as a conservation reserve by the State and an Aboriginal body corporate," he said.

"The area is known for its ancient Aboriginal rock art, some of which dates back 20,000 years.

"The plan aims to protect the rock art and provide local indigenous people with ongoing, sustainable employment and business development opportunities.

"This includes work in managing the land to protect its cultural and environmental values, and also in tourism development.

"Proposals in the draft plan include the development of a visitor centre, visitor accommodation and various recreation sites to cater for visitors."

The Minister said that as well as the Aboriginal cultural heritage of the peninsula, the draft management plan also proposed strategies to conserve native wildlife, provide public recreational facilities and improve access.

"The relatively undisturbed coastal and terrestrial habitats support a diversity of plant and animal life, including some vulnerable and endangered species," he said.

"The plan recommends a range of strategies to help conserve the area's natural values, including weed control, rehabilitation of disturbed areas and the continued implementation of the fox baiting program."

The draft management plan for the Burrup Conservation Reserve was prepared by the traditional owners (Ngarda-ngarli) and the Department of Environment and Conservation. It has been released for a two-month public comment period.

Mr McGowan said an historic native title agreement in January 2003 saw the State Government return freehold title of 5000ha of the Burrup Peninsula to Aboriginal ownership.

North West Coastal MLA Fred Riebeling said the draft plan would help protect the area's unique cultural and natural heritage, while also proposing new and exciting

business opportunities for local indigenous people.

"In particular, the proposals for the development of a cultural centre, camping facilities and tourism ventures reflect a greater recognition of the Traditional Owners' distinctive place in the region," Mr Riebeling said.

"The Ngarda-ngarli people welcome visitors to their land and encourage them to enjoy the country, to look around and appreciate and learn from the country and its people."

The draft management plan is available at <http://www.naturebase.net/haveyoursay> and copies can be viewed at the Karratha, Dampier, Roebourne and Wickham public libraries. Copies of the plan also are available from the Karratha and Kensington offices of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Written submissions should be addressed to: Management Planning Co-ordinator, Burrup Peninsula Conservation Reserve Planning Advisory Committee, Department of Environment and Conservation, Locked Bag 104, Bentley Delivery Centre, WA 6983.

They also can be emailed to planning@dec.wa.gov.au. The closing date for submissions is September 15.