



THE

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Can we trust big industry?



Corporate destruction of Bushland at Perth Airport

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In the spotlight

Questions in Parliament reveal Burrup Fertilisers reported 8 'incidents' in 8 months

By Chris Tallentire, Director,
Conservation Council of WA

Any doubt about how many reported incidents have occurred at the Burrup Fertilisers plant has been removed by the response to recent Parliamentary questions printed below.

Recently, the company took exception to comments made by the Council on ABC Kimberley and North West Radio and immediately asked its lawyers to write to us. The company would be better advised to openly admit when problems occur and to make its operations as transparent as possible.

A transcript of the ABC Kimberley and North West Radio interview mentioned above is available by contacting the Council.

Parliamentary Questions

asked by Hon Giz Watson MLC

With reference to the recent spate of incidents associated with the Burrup Fertilisers Plant, I ask:

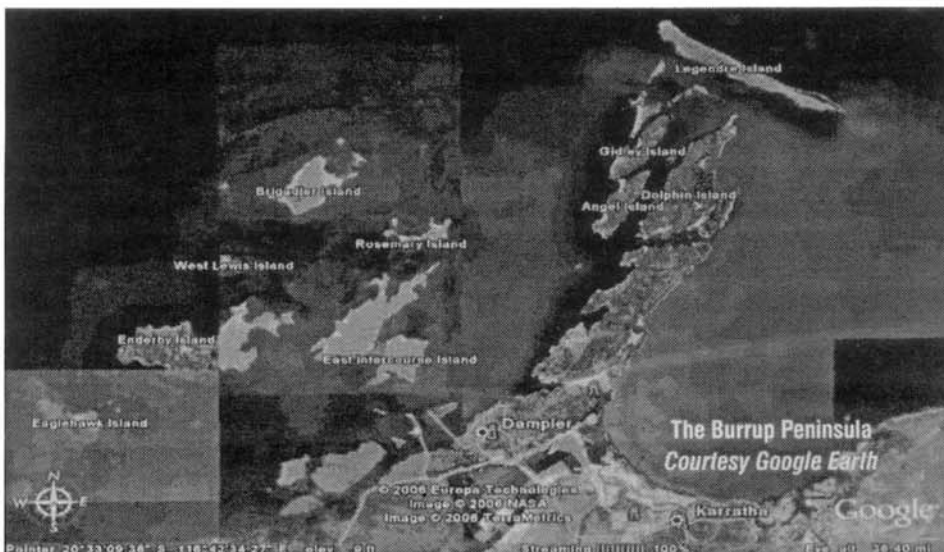
(1) How many incidents have been reported to the Department of Environment and Conservation since the establishment of the plant?

(2) Will the Minister table a complete list of all spillages, leaks, emissions and accidents that have occurred at this plant since operations began?

(3) Can the Minister advise the nature of warnings and/or advice that is supplied to surrounding industries in the event of an incident at the Burrup Fertilisers Plant?

(4) How many such warnings referred to in (3), have been issued since the establishment of the Burrup Fertilisers Plant?

(5) Given that the public beach at Hearson Cove is down wind of the Burrup Fertilisers Plant and is closer to the plant than any of the surrounding industries, what levels of warning are provided by Burrup Fertiliser to the public at this beach?



Answers:

1) Eight incidents have been reported.

2) Incidents reported to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) are:

- January 2006 - Discharge of contents of Western Sedimentation Basin to salt flats prior to imminent arrival of Tropical Cyclone Clare.

- April 2006 - Release of seawater onto site following two separate pipe bursts in seawater cooling system.

- April 2006 - Leak of high pH water to salt flats following water washdown of ammonia released through flare.

- May 2006 - Release of process gases, steam and the solvent, Amdea, to atmosphere through vent following plant upset.

- July 2006 - Release of freshwater onto site following pipe burst in process system.

- August 2006 - Emission of unburnt ammonia vapour to atmosphere through flare due to inefficient combustion while flaring to maintain pressure in storage tanks.

- August 2006 - Release of waste gases to atmosphere through vent following plant upset.

- August 2006 - Release of seawater onto site following two separate pipe bursts in seawater cooling system

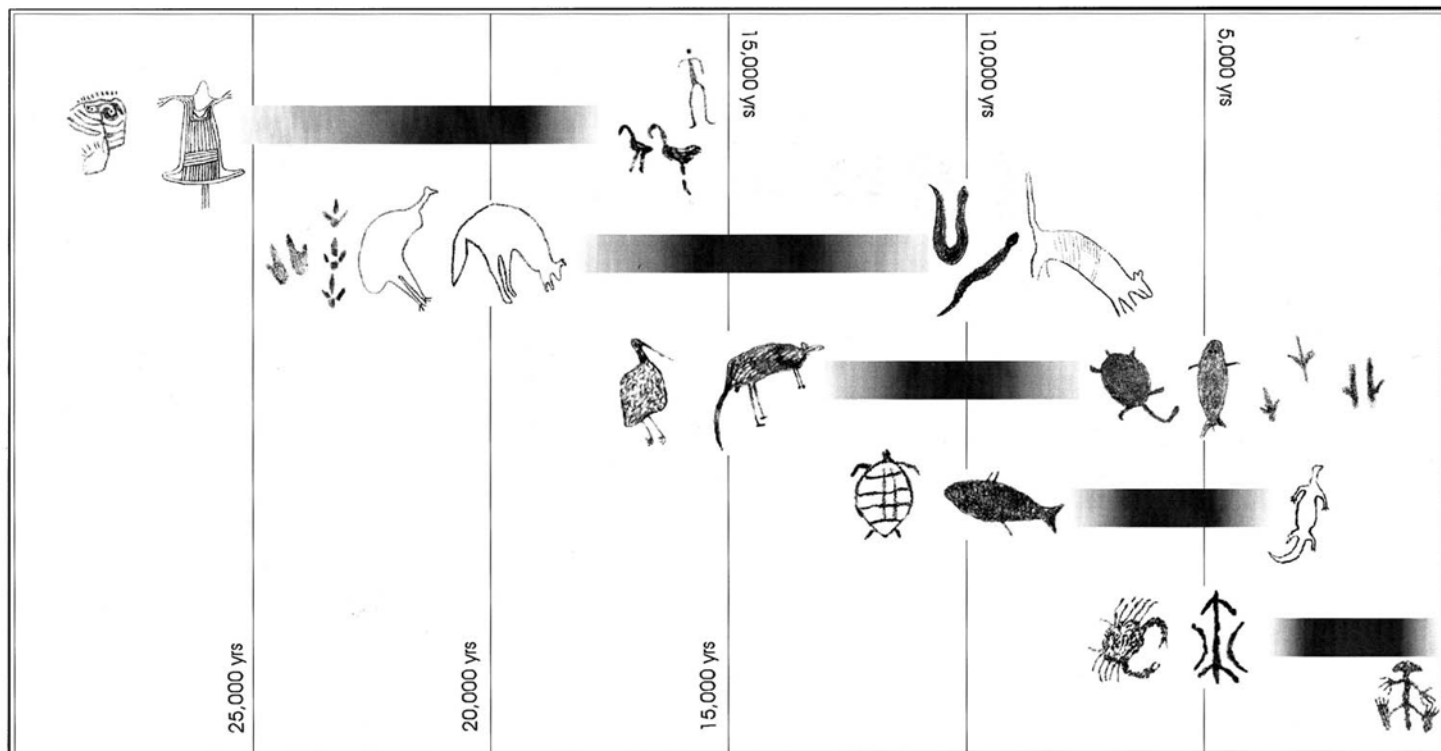
3) DEC is aware that Burrup Fertilisers Plant has a communications protocol to advise surrounding industries, and was recently informed of an upgrade to a system called 'Missionmode', which expedites advice to surrounding industries in the event of an incident.

4) DEC is aware of two such warnings issued in August 2006. However, DEC does not require that it be included in all communications between the Burrup Fertilisers Plant and surrounding industries.

5) DEC understands that implementation of the Burrup Fertilisers Plant communication protocol, including the levels of warning, is determined by the company and depends on the nature and potential risk from an incident. Further, the plant is designated as a Major Hazardous Facility by the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection and as such a communication response, determined by the significance of the incident, is required as a condition of operations. Following the recent ammonia vapour release incident, DEC has recommended that the Burrup Fertilisers Plant establish fixed ammonia monitors in locations outside the plant, in addition to the portable ammonia monitors that they have provided to some of the surrounding industries.

Burrup - a clash of the Titans

By Robin Chapple, Director, Mineral Policy Institute, Sydney



Timeline courtesy Ken Mulvaney

The Burrup Peninsula, formerly Dampier Island, is one of the 47 islands that make up the Dampier Archipelago also known as the Dampier Rock Art Precinct, currently being considered for inclusion onto the National Heritage list by Senator Campbell, the Federal Environment and Heritage Minister.

The 'Burrup' and the islands house what is considered to be the largest and possibly the oldest gallery of petroglyphs (rock engravings) anywhere in the world. The rock art represents a number of phases of humankind's evolution, with a number of visitation periods spread between 6,000 and 30,000 years ago.

This mix of styles and engravings, possibly in excess of one million, in one location makes this site globally unique. This is a site which provides an incredible scientific insight into Australia's early fauna and humankind's global prehistory.

After receipt of advice from the new Australian Heritage Council Senator Campbell had 20 days in which to make his decision whether to list the area or not. What he has sought to do is to put off his decision until February 2007 by calling for a further 40 days of public comment, giving him a further 60 days to deliberate on those submissions.

This site represents a clash of the Titans with biodiversity, cultural heritage and humankind's prehistory on one side and the Department of Industry and Resources the key WA Government department promoting the destruction of the heritage values of the Burrup Peninsula on the other.

Industry cannot get off lightly either. Currently Woodside Energy is proposing to use Holden Point, one of the most densely carved areas of the Burrup for its new Pluto LNG Project.

“Woodside Energy is proposing to use Holden Point, one of the most densely carved areas of the Burrup for its new Pluto LNG Project.”

While Holden Point is a pristine undisturbed site with thousands of petroglyphs, next door Woodside, BHP Billiton, BP, Chevron, Shell, and MIMI (a joint Mitsubishi/Mitsui Company) have a suitable piece of land for development on which all the rock art has unfortunately already been destroyed or relocated.

It is abysmal that in this day and age these supposedly respected multinationals will not consider their responsibility to the heritage values of the Burrup and allow one of their own partners to use this disturbed land just because of corporate rivalry and fiscal interest.

Further reading, information and updates are available at:

<http://www.burrup.org.au/>

<http://www.dampierrockart.net/>

<http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/dampier/web/index.html>

<http://www.mp.wa.gov.au/colinbarnett>

<http://www.peterandren.com/>

<http://www.rachelsiewert.org.au>