

Parties unite on ancient rock art

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BIPARTISAN support is growing for ancient rock art on Western Australia's Burrup peninsula to be protected, with calls by Liberal and Labor politicians for industry to show leadership in minimising damage to the sites.

Labor backbencher Carmen Lawrence and Liberal senator Judi Moylan have publicly endorsed a call for Woodside Energy to reconsider plans to build a pipeline and processing plant on two sites on the Burrup, which is scattered with rock carvings between 6000 and 20,000 years old.

Australia's biggest resource project, the North West Shelf joint venture, is already located on the Burrup, but project operator Woodside is planning a new operation to process gas from its Pluto offshore gas reservoir.

The WA National Trust claims the Pluto project will lead to the further destruction or removal of hundreds of rock carvings, and has urged Woodside to negotiate with its joint venture partners to instead use an already cleared site south of the North West Shelf industrial precinct.

In letters to joint venture partners BP, Shell, BHP Billiton, Chevron and Japan Australia LNG, the trust said the Pluto sites contained unusually high densities of rock art and asked

the companies to help Woodside relocate the Pluto facilities.

National Trust chairman David Dolan said all five joint venture partners had signalled in favour of co-operation.

In almost identically worded responses, they indicated their willingness to "work collaboratively with any or all of the other resource owners in the region, including Pluto, (to) enhance the overall value of resource developments (and provide) potentially improved environmental and heritage outcomes".

Mr Dolan said it was heartening that a collaborative approach by commercial rivals might be possible, even though 40 years of industrial development on the Burrup could not be undone. "We're saying from now on, damage to the art should be absolutely minimal."

A Woodside spokesman told *The Australian* it did not wish to disclose the details of any talks.

Senator Moylan said she supported calls for further discussion between Woodside and the joint venturers about ways of avoiding further destruction of rock art.

Dr Lawrence has also called on the state Government to help Woodside relocate its gas processing plant.

Federal Heritage Minister Ian Campbell has delayed until February a decision on whether to list the Burrup on the National Heritage List.