

Minister slams push for listing

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Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell has accused a coalition of Labor, Green and independent MPs of threatening billions of dollars of LNG gas exports by applying for an emergency heritage listing of the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia.

Greens senator Rachel Siewert, Labor MP Carmen Lawrence and independent Peter Andren launched the application, which said developers of an onshore gas plant wanted to destroy or move ancient Aboriginal rock art.

The Australian Heritage Council concluded in September that the Burrup area met the high threshold for inclusion in the National Heritage List and Senator Campbell is negotiating with West Australian Premier Alan Carpenter and the developer of the \$5 billion Pluto gas plant on the peninsula, Woodside Petroleum, to resolve the issue.

The negotiating process could continue for months – the issue is pitting the case for economic development against the push for cultural preservation of the area.

Senator Campbell must make a

decision on the emergency listing application within 10 days. He has written to the newly installed federal Opposition Leader, Kevin Rudd, and said the application “puts at significant risk the future of the multibillion-dollar gas industry”.

Proposed amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act that relate to the Burrup decision are due to be considered in the Senate today and Senator Campbell has called for opposition support. Mr Rudd’s office could not be reached for comment last night.

“This affects the biggest export project in Australian history,” Senator Campbell told reporters.

“It is possible to disturb some of the art without destroying some of the heritage, that’s been proven. I remind people there are a million pieces of art – we’re talking about disturbing less than 0.02 of 1 per cent of that art for the benefit of the global environment,” Senator Campbell said.

Senator Campbell said the LNG projects contributed to greenhouse gas abatement programs.

Dr Lawrence told the ABC yesterday: “If you read the report recommending listing, it doesn’t pull any punches. It’s a very strong recommendation.

“In light of that recommendation, growing community concern and indications that Woodside [is] proceeding with preparatory work on site, we’re very keen to ensure the minister stops anything happening.”

Senator Siewert said she had heard “disturbing information that Woodside may be moving in to relocate or destroy rock art within the next few days”. “We believe that this will have an adverse impact on the heritage values of the Burrup. “The Environment and Heritage Minister has had ample opportunity to make his decision,” she said.

with wires

KEY POINTS

- The recommendation for heritage listing is very strong.
- A decision on the emergency listing application must be made within 10 days.