

Greens upset at Burrup heritage snub

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Five of Australia's iconic national parks have been added to the National Heritage List but the Greens want Western Australia's Burrup Peninsula rock art site added as well.

Environment and Heritage Minister Ian Campbell today added to the heritage list Sydney's Royal National Park and the adjoining Garawarra State Conservation Area, the Warrumbungles in northern NSW, Ku-ring-gai, in Sydney's north, The Grampians (Gariwerd) in western Victoria and the Stirling Ranges in South Australia.

They join historic structures and sites such as the Sydney Opera House, the Australian War Memorial, the Eureka Stockade and Captain Cook's landing site on the heritage list, which provides them with extra layers of protection.

Senator Campbell said the five new parks on the list showcased some of Australia's most beautiful and diverse natural heritage and deserved to be given the highest heritage status.

"Our heritage distinguishes us. It's much more than the 'old' or 'outdated' - it's about evolving and living landscapes," he said in a statement.

But WA Greens senator Rachel Siewert questioned why the Burrup site could not be placed on the heritage list.

The Burrup site contains hundreds of thousands of figures, believed to be thousands of years old, inscribed into rocks.

The site is under pressure from the north-west shelf gas projects and an onshore facility which would destroy some of the art.

"The National Heritage values of the Burrup rock art province are indisputable," Senator Siewert said in a statement.

"These values are at risk because of industrial expansion but instead of protecting this site, the minister has procrastinated for several months while adding these five non-controversial sites to the list."

Senator Siewert said she was pleased to see the addition of the new national parks.

"But this minister has shown consistent form in avoiding the hard decisions on heritage. He now has the decision ahead of him over the Burrup.

"Next week, he will decide on our emergency listing nomination. This will show the nation whether or not the minister is actually prepared to list controversial heritage sites which are clearly at risk."

Senator Campbell said the emergency listing nomination by Senator Siewert, Labor's Carmen Lawrence and independent MP Peter Andren was "outrageous".

"Why I regard it as outrageous is we're making a decision on the listing of the whole region ... and they're saying well just chuck that out and put an emergency listing in," Senator Campbell said.

"Why has (Opposition Leader) Kevin Rudd allowed a senior member of his team to try to stop Woodside's project, that's the question."