

Rally backs Burrup rock art protection

Wednesday Dec 20 19:46 AEDT

The development of a gas plant near ancient Aboriginal rock art on Western Australia's Burrup Peninsula would be like destroying art in a museum, a rally in Perth has been told.

About 25 people rallied in the city centre to urge federal Heritage Minister Ian Campbell to approve the emergency heritage listing of the peninsula, in the north of the state, which contains thousands of rock carvings believed to date back to the Ice Age.

Resources giant Woodside Petroleum wants to develop a gas project on part of the peninsula which would affect 165 carvings.

Scott Ludlam, from Friends of Australian Rock Art, which describes itself as a cultural heritage advocacy group, told the crowd Senator Campbell must act now.

"If I were to ... walk into the Art Gallery of Western Australia and start tearing down art works, I would be locked up as criminally insane", Mr Ludlam said.

"And yet that is essentially what is being presided over the Burrup Peninsula right now."

Mr Ludlam is a staffer for Australian Greens senator Rachel Siewert, who along with Labor MP Carmen Lawrence and independent MP Peter Andren have applied for emergency heritage listing of the Burrup Peninsula.

Senator Campbell has until December 27 to announce his decision.

Robert Watson, the moderator of the WA Synod of the Uniting Church, told the gathering protecting the Burrup Peninsula was critical to the cultural, spiritual and artistic heritage of the world.

"Just because it is little known, makes it no less valuable than the Stonehenges, pyramids and the cave drawings in Europe," Mr Watson said.

Last week, Senator Campbell said the emergency listing nomination was "outrageous".