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Application to protect Burrup rock art rejected. 22/12/2006. ABC News Online

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Burrup: There have been concerns about plans to relocate the rock art (file photo). (ABC)

Application to protect Burrup rock art rejected

The Federal Government has rejected an emergency application to heritage list a site home to millions of Aboriginal rock engravings, saying it could obstruct the development of the gas industry.

Federal Heritage Minister Ian Campbell had just 10 days to consider the application, which was lodged jointly by the state's former premier, Carmen Lawrence, the Greens and independent MP Peter Andren.

They were concerned about gas giant Woodside's plan to relocate 165 pieces of Burrup rock art.

But Senator Campbell says the application could hinder Australia's gas development.

"It's important that we protect our heritage but also protect our economy, protect our jobs," he said.

"Also see natural gas being exported to the rest of the world."

Senator Campbell says moving some of the ancient engravings will not ruin the area's value.

"My strong view is that you can have the expansion of Woodside's facilities, expansion of Woodside's gas exports and other economic activity of the Burrup alongside a strong heritage protection regime," he said.

Mr Campbell says he will push ahead with plans to change federal environment laws that will allow the area to be used by industry and be placed on the national heritage register.

Greens Senator Rachel Siewert is extremely disappointed the Senator Campbell rejected the application.

Senator Siewert says the Minister's actions are unacceptable.

"He is incapable of carrying out his heritage responsibilities," she said.

"This is undoubtedly a heritage site - of not only national, but of world significance, and if he can't see his duty is to protect this area - to list it and protect it - he should step down as Minister because he's incapable of carrying out his duties."

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