

Woodside keen to move in on Burrup Peninsula

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Reporter: David Weber

ELEANOR HALL: Woodside Energy has welcomed the Environment Minister's decision.

The company is planning to move around 150 rock art pieces so it can develop a gas processing plant on the Burrup Peninsula.

Woodside already has government approval to move some of the petroglyphs, even though it's not making a final investment decision on its Pluto project until sometime next year.

The state MP representing the area has described the items that will be affected as "pretty ordinary anyway".

In Perth, David Weber reports.

DAVID WEBER: A spokesman for Woodside says the company welcomes the decision to reject the application for emergency heritage listing.

Woodside believes it won't need to destroy any rock art, and all of the pieces that are in the way can be moved.

The company is likely to go ahead with site preparation ahead of a final investment decision, which will be made around the middle of next year.

State Labor MP Fred Riebling says Woodside is going to extraordinary lengths to shift what he's described as 'ordinary rock art'.

The Member for North West Coastal has criticised the federal MPs who were seeking emergency protection.

FRED RIEBLING: My qualification is basically I've lived there for 25 years. I've been all over the Burrup Peninsula and that's something clearly none of those people can lay claim to, and if they think that those pieces of rock art are significant, then we're in trouble.

DAVID WEBER: Fred Riebling says the WA Government will protect sites that it considers to be significant.

FRED RIEBLING: There are significant areas of rock carving that will be

protected under West Australian legislation and are protected under West Australian legislation and Woodside isn't anywhere near those pieces of rock art.

Now it's false to claim that the pieces that are being shifted will destroy the integrity of the Burrup Peninsula. It just is a million miles from the truth.

DAVID WEBER: Can you see potential problems if there is allowed to be further development and more disturbance of some of the sites up there?

FRED RIEBLING: It depends on where that development and disturbance in fact is. Now, the industrial sites as we all know, are in a valley and that valley is predominantly a sand valley and so there is no rock art on the predominant industrial site on the Burrup Peninsula.

So the vast majority of the industrial sites won't create any problems but... and the significant rock art in the valleys and off that particular valley are being protected.

DAVID WEBER: The former State Liberal Energy Minister has been a great advocate for protection of the rock art.

Colin Barnett says he's disappointed in the federal and state governments.

COLIN BARNETT: Sadly, it appears to me that neither a Federal Liberal Government or State Labor Government is prepared to make the decisions to protect this rock art.

And it's not rocket science: there are a number of commonsense things that should be done to make sure that we accept our responsibility, a world responsibility and that's to protect the most unique and largest collection of rock art in the world.

DAVID WEBER: Mr Barnett says the history of moving rock art is appalling.

The Chief Executive Officer of the National Trust in WA has attacked Senator Campbell's handling of the whole process.

Tom Perrigo says he's not satisfied with Woodside's explanation of what it's going to be doing at its development sites.

TOM PERRIGO: Quite frankly, you know, Woodside's already talking about doing the whole project when they don't have approval to do the whole project.

So site A, we still don't know. I mean, nobody knows what exactly Woodside's doing in A or B, because they failed and they refuse to clearly show people what they're doing.

ELEANOR HALL: That's Tom Perrigo, the CEO of the National Trust in Western Australia, speaking to David Weber.