

Aborigines give Woodside cold shoulder

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NATIVE title claimants to the Burrup Peninsula say they won't have anything to do with Woodside Energy's "wanton destruction" of ancient West Australian rock art.

The Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo people say Woodside has asked them and other Aboriginal groups to monitor the removal of rocks to enable site works for its Pluto liquefied natural gas project to start in area A of the Burrup Peninsula.

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

Site works will require wholesale levelling of the landscape destroying 165 pictures.

Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo spokesman, Wilfred Hicks, said the community had fought too long and hard to save their cultural heritage to give in to Woodside's "vandalism" of the rock art.

"The history and heritage of the Dampier Archipelago, including the Burrup, is too important to Aboriginal people, and all Australians, to be wantonly destroyed by Woodside with the state's approval," Mr Hicks said.

"There is already one fenced off cemetery of rock art left over from 1960's Woodside development.

"The last thing the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo want is another cemetery of rock art vandalism by Woodside and the state government in 2007."

Mr Hicks said it was "wrong" of Woodside to start site works in Area A while a decision was pending, by the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee, on Woodside's application for permission to disturb rock art sites on Area B.

He said the Pluto project would not be lost if the Burrup rock art was saved.

"Pluto can be located within vacant parts of the existing Woodside Northwest Shelf Joint Venture land or in the Hearson Cove area where Burrup Fertilisers is located."

Comment was being sought from Woodside.

Protest groups last month urged Federal Heritage Minister Ian Campbell to make an emergency heritage listing of the peninsula to protect the thousands of rock carvings believed to date back to the Ice Age.