



WA Aboriginal art heritage threatened

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One of the largest theatres of rock art in the world, located on Burrup Peninsula in WA, would be in danger from emissions if the planned liquefied natural gas plant to be built by Woodside goes ahead. These emissions include ammonia, carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide which, in the opinion of scientists, are very damaging.

It is estimated that the plant will increase the value of domestic gross production by \$17.6 billion when operating in 2010. It will employ 2,000 workers in the building of the plant and 300 in its operation.

Woodside has been given the all clear by the West Australian Labor Environment Minister Sheila McHale and the Federal Liberal Environment Minister Ian Campbell. McHale made her decision in spite of contrary advice from WA Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee. Instead, she followed the urging of WA's Department of Industry and Resources for development at any cost.

Campbell ignored the decision of the Australian Heritage Council that the whole place was significant, and should be fully listed as a heritage site. It is important on a world scale and an archeological survey could answer questions on the pre-history of mankind. Campbell considered only 200 square metres under threat and that, while some art was more significant, the rest could be sacrificed. One hundred and fifty pieces are to be relocated under Aboriginal supervision to make way for the plant.

There is rising opposition to the building of the plant in Burrup, cutting across political lines. Carmen Lawrence, Labor MHR for Fremantle, WA Green Senator Rachel Siewert and Independent MHR Peter Anderson have called for emergency heritage listing over Dampier Archipelago and Burrup Peninsula.

Colin Barnett, previous leader of the state Liberal Party, said the WA government should ensure the project is moved to a cleared

adjacent site. Other sources said Woodside could locate the Pluto project at Onslow at an extra cost of \$500 million.

BHP Billiton withdrew a proposal for development at Burrup because of public criticism.

Widespread grassroots opposition to the Woodside plan is growing. This is indicated by the number of letters in the *West Australian* newspaper.

This opposition was consolidated with Friends of Rock Art being formed by concerned people in October 2006. They have organised demonstrations and issued material. A recent vigil in Perth brought 50 people together. They plan to demonstrate outside Woodside offices in St Georges Terrace at 12.30pm on Australia Day this Friday, January 26.

The demand for heritage protection for the very significant rock art at Burrup is dividing the major parties but uniting the people in growing action to preserve this priceless part of our national heritage. ★