



ENERGY FOR THE FUTURE

2006 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Case Study:

Protecting Aboriginal Rock Art on the Burrup Peninsula

The Burrup Peninsula and surrounding islands, near Karratha in Western Australia, contain large amounts of rock engravings and stone arrangements created by Aboriginal people over many thousands of years.

This area, known as the Dampier Rock Art Precinct, is estimated to have up to one million engravings, some with elaborate, clearly discernible images and many with lines or markings.

The rock art, and the area, is a highly significant part of Aboriginal and Australian history, and as an industry which has shared a part of the Burrup Peninsula for over 25 years, we understand very clearly its cultural and historical significance and value to local Aboriginal people. We remain fully committed to the protection of the rock art.

A Place for Cultural Heritage and Industry

In the 1980s, we began to develop on the Burrup Peninsula what is today Australia's largest resource development, the North West Shelf Venture. From this operation we produce liquefied natural gas, liquid petroleum gas, condensate, natural gas and crude oil. These products are in high demand all over the world helping us contribute more than 1% of Australia's gross domestic product and about 2% of exports. The North West Shelf Venture also pays about \$1 billion a year in government royalties and excise and also accounts for about 40% of Australia's oil and gas production and about two-thirds of Western Australia's gas supply.

At the time of development, there was a careful process of site selection for the Venture's onshore gas plant, involving State experts from the Western Australian Museum and the Environmental Protection Authority. Ultimately the location for the Venture near Withnell Bay was preferred over others in the region because it was considered more protective of rock art and the natural environment.

Before construction of the gas plant began, the Museum also completed a comprehensive heritage survey in which it located more than 9500 petroglyphs within the Venture's lease area. About 1800 items were salvaged and relocated to a nearby area.

The steps we took at that time, including archaeological surveys and subsequent salvage work, were considered to be world's best practice.

In 2003, in a mutually-agreed native title settlement between the Western Australia Government and Aboriginal claimants, a large proportion of the Burrup Peninsula was transferred to Aboriginal ownership and set aside for conservation. The landmark agreement also established areas in which industrial development can occur.

The North West Shelf Venture leases occupy around 600 hectares of the 42,000 hectare Dampier Rock Art Precinct. The Pluto project represents a further 200 hectare area. Large sections of our leases will not be developed.

An Ongoing Commitment

Our commitment to the protection and preservation of rock art continues. Each year, we spend about \$1 million on rock art management. We are also participating in a four-year survey by the Burrup Rock Art Monitoring Management Committee established by the State of Western Australia to understand if industrial emissions are affecting rock art. Interim results of the study, carried out by CSIRO, show that emissions on the Burrup are considerably lower than concentrations in cities around Australia.

Further underlining our commitment were the efforts made as part of the expansion of the North West Shelf Venture gas plant in 2005. A road upgrade was required for the transport of 70 prefabricated components and the road design was carried out with the traditional owner groups to understand and avoid heritage sites. In total, 14 sites were identified next to the haul road and were avoided.

The finished road is not as straight as it could be, but the modules were able to navigate the route – and those 14 heritage sites remain undisturbed.



Pluto – Best Practice Heritage Management

We are now planning to build a further LNG project on the Burrup Peninsula, south of the existing North West Shelf LNG plant. The Pluto LNG Development will cover approximately 80 hectares within a 200 hectare lease within the Burrup Industrial Estate.

The aim of the Pluto project team from the earliest design stages has been to take every step possible to avoid rock art.

The traditional custodians, which include the Yaburara, Mardudhunera, Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi and Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo, have been involved in surveys with archaeologists and anthropologists to locate and electronically record the detail of 3,000 engravings found in the lease area.

With this information we have been able to sit down with the Elders and community members with Pluto designs and change plans based on their feedback. To this end, engineering designs have been modified many times to shift tanks, pipelines and plant boundaries to avoid significant sites.

About 95% of the 3,000 engravings in the Pluto area will be left undisturbed. The remaining 150 rock engravings will be relocated to undeveloped areas within our leases, under a cultural heritage management plan developed with the input of traditional owners and qualified archaeologists and anthropologists.

National Heritage Listing

In 2004, the Dampier Archipelago, including the Burrup Peninsula, was nominated for inclusion on the National Heritage List under the Australian *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.

The nominations were assessed by the Australian Heritage Council. In late 2006, the Council reported to the Australian Environment Minister that a significant proportion of the area met the threshold for inclusion on the National Heritage List after finding that it potentially contained national heritage values.

In its recommendation to the Minister, the Council proposed a conceptual boundary for a "National Heritage Place" which covered a large area of the Dampier Archipelago, including about 269 square kilometres of land.

Until November 2006, Woodside had not supported a listing of the Burrup because we believed it would provide no additional protection to the rock art but would add an unnecessary regulatory burden on its operations and other as yet unplanned developments.

However, in late 2006 amendments to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* were passed by Federal Parliament which generally provided significant improvements for sustainable development and for environmental protection.

With a new legislative regime pending, Woodside chose to end its opposition to a heritage listing of the Burrup with some caveats including the establishment of a Burrup Gas Precinct with a boundary that separated gas production areas from heritage listed areas.

Woodside's proposed boundary for a gas precinct represents a very small proportion of the Dampier Rock Art precinct. Its activities in the gas precinct would continue to be subject to strict heritage management.

In December 2006, the Federal Government rejected an emergency heritage listing nomination of the Burrup Peninsula on the basis that, although the rock art was of significant value, it was not under imminent threat. The Minister also indicated that a final decision on a heritage listing would be coming in mid 2007 to enable time for a comprehensive and workable management plan to be developed that could enable economic certainty and heritage protection to co-exist.

Woodside continues to work with the Australian Government and traditional custodians to find an outcome that will bring benefits for all.

We are committed to working with Aboriginal groups, rock art specialists, local communities, government and industry partners to improve rock art protection in these areas and ensure that Australia can develop its LNG and local gas industry for the benefit of all Australians.

