

Burrup art protected

By Robert Taylor and Ben Cranston

TAKING his first hurried look at ancient rock art on the Burrup Peninsula last week Federal Heritage Minister Malcolm Turnbull said the area would be registered as a national heritage site by the middle of the year.

The move would ensure most of the Dampier Archipelago's ancient Aboriginal rock art would be protected from future industrial development.

North West Coastal MLA Fred Riebeling said he was not directly opposed to Heritage Listing the Burrup if local residents and industry were considered.

He said a road through to the Northern Burrup was promised and he hoped the heritage listing would not jeopardise its construction.

His announcement was welcomed by former State Liberal leader Colin Barnett, who has been campaigning for the site to be heritage listed.

But it comes too late to prevent a small number of carvings

being moved to make way for gas giant Woodside's \$10 billion Pluto LNG facility.

"The near-term objective is for a listing by the middle of the year with conservation agreements entered into with the relevant companies that will give everybody a degree of certainty," Mr Turnbull said in Karratha last week.

"The crucial steps towards the listing are establishing an appropriate boundary and coming to an agreement about the management strategies and we're well advanced in doing that."

Until late last year, both Woodside and the WA Government had opposed a national heritage listing for the Burrup, fearing that the move would invite court action by third parties against the Pluto development.

However, after changes to the Federal environment protection and biodiversity Act, the State and Woodside began negotiations with the Federal Government over the listing.

A spokesman for Woodside

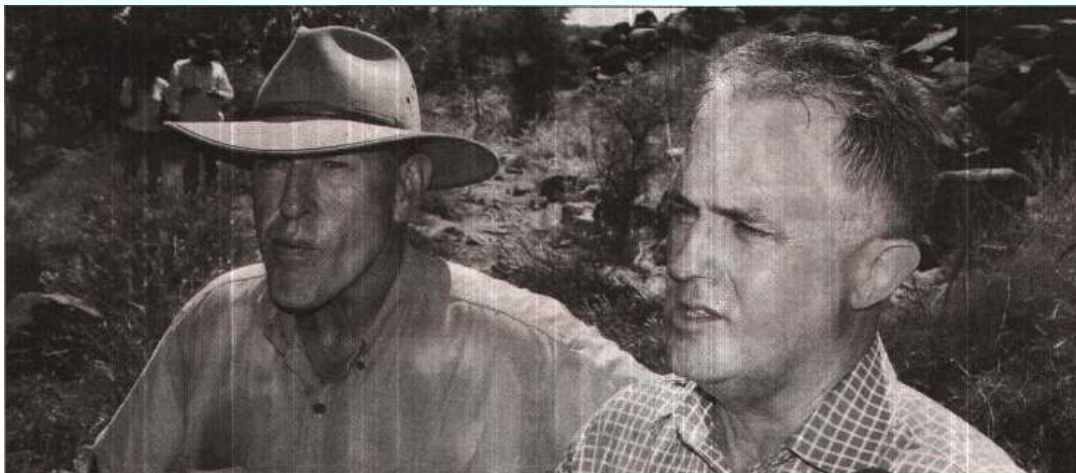
said the company supported the site being heritage listed 'if the listing recognises that industry and heritage can coexist on the Burrup'.

Under the supervision of local Aboriginal elders, the company has moved 42 carvings from its development site.

It intends moving between 100 and 200 rock carvings in total from the estimated 3000 on the site.

The National Trust estimates there could be up to one million carvings in the 270sq km of the peninsula and surrounding islands.

A spokesman for Alan Carpenter said yesterday that Mr Turnbull's announcement did not significantly change the Premier's statement to Parliament in November when he said Labor would work with the Federal Government to 'protect the significant heritage values of the archipelago without jeopardising industry'.



Federal Heritage Minister Malcolm Turnbull, right, speaks to media on the Burrup last week with Federal Member for Kalgoorlie Barry Haase by his side.