

Burrup rock art treatment poor, says Barnett

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Liberal MP and former Opposition leader Colin Barnett says world heritage listing of ancient Aboriginal rock art on the Burrup Peninsula is inevitable, describing the State and Federal governments' handling of the development at the site as a sham.

Commenting after the release of a fresh report which raises concerns that industrial development poses a high risk of endangering the rock art, Mr Barnett said a Third World country would have handled the cultural heritage issue better than WA.

Up to 200 ancient Aboriginal engravings will be moved to make way for Woodside Petroleum's \$10 billion Pluto gas project, with 42 motifs already relocated as part of preparation work on the first phase of the oil and gas giant's LNG plant.

Mr Barnett, who has been campaigning for the LNG project to be moved to a cleared, adjacent site leased by the North-West Shelf Venture partners, said ancient engravings were being disturbed before Woodside had even made a final investment decision on the project.

The former leader said it was not too late to prevent the further disruption of the rock art.

Mr Barnett has urged Federal politicians to adopt a compromise which would preserve and protect 5400ha of the Burrup through heritage listing and allow 1630ha for existing and prospective industrial sites, saying his plan would provide certainty for development while minimising further disruption to any rock art.

"It is either an important area or it is not," Mr Barnett said.

"World heritage listing is inevitable. (But) you would not think we are some struggling Third World country which needs to be dictated to as to how it deals with heritage. The status of the rock art (makes it) in my opinion without doubt the most important heritage site in WA and possibly the nation. It is up there with Uluru."

The WA Heritage Council is completing its assessment documentation for the Burrup and is awaiting the outcome of the

Federal heritage listing process, which is expected to be announced within the next month.

Woodside spokesman Roger Martin said the company supported a listing of the area which recognised that industry and heritage listing could coexist.

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