

Burrup to do double duty

Andrew Burrell

Industrial expansion worth billions of dollars could still proceed on the Burrup Peninsula despite a commonwealth decision to place much of the area on the national heritage list, the West Australian government said yesterday.

Treasurer Eric Ripper said his government supported the heritage listing, which would protect thousands of pieces of ancient Aboriginal rock art – even though Premier Alan Carpenter warned last year that the move would be an economic “catastrophe”.

The announcement by federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull that 241 sq km of the wider Dampier Archipelago would be protected would not affect energy giant Woodside Petroleum’s plans to build a \$10 billion liquefied natural gas plant on the Burrup.

The company has begun clearing a site for the plant and said yesterday it expected to relocate about 150 pieces of Aboriginal rock art.

The state government is keen to attract more companies to set up on the peninsula, which it has promoted as a major industrial hub after sinking more than \$180 million into infrastructure there since 2001.

Mr Ripper said yesterday that industrial development was still possible in the heritage-listed areas, although companies would now need federal approval.

He said \$15 billion of exports come out of the relatively small region.

“Further development is possible because there are industrial sites that are not in the heritage-listed area. Even in the heritage-listed area, development is possible.”

Friends of Australian Rock Art spokesman Robin Chapple welcomed the heritage listing but said rock art was still threatened by Woodside’s Pluto LNG plant.

“In the long-term, the Pluto plant and its emissions would irreparably damage the rock art,” he said.