



George Newhouse Candidate for Wentworth

Newhouse committed to Protecting the Burrup Peninsular

22 August 2007

Labor Candidate for Wentworth, George Newhouse, has restated his support for protecting the Burrup Peninsula and congratulated the Friends of Australian Rock Art Inc for raising the issue locally by their half page advertisement in this week's Wentworth Courier.

I strongly support the actions of the Friends of Australian Rock Art Inc. In April 2007 I moved a Mayoral Minute at Waverley Council to protect the Burrup Peninsula. [See Mayoral Minute Attached]

On World Environment Day I was able to highlight the damage being done to the Burrup Peninsula by hosting an exhibition of Burrup's magnificent rock art and landscape in conjunction with Get Up.

The Environment Minister, Malcolm Turnbull has been putting it about that he has protected the Burrup Peninsula - but the Friends of Australian Rock Art Inc has exposed the lie.

Australia's oldest rock carvings are under threat of destruction and require immediate protection.

"The Howard Government's initial stance on this goes to show how out of touch they are with everyday Australians," Mr Newhouse said.

[Ends]

For further media comment contact:
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Burrup Peninsular heritage artworks under threat (A03/2567)

MOTION / DECISION (Newhouse)

That Council:

1. Supports an inclusive management plan for the Dampier Islands that heritage-lists all remaining rock carvings, and balances the aim of future economic development with the duty to care for cultural treasures, that once destroyed, can never be replaced.
2. Calls on the Commonwealth Government to:
 - (a). Move all future industry to any one of the other suitable, nearby sites, as called for by a diverse range of leaders from business, science, conservation and politics.
 - (b). Openly consult with all the parties involved with the Dampier Islands.
 - (c). Heritage list rock carving sites with defined boundary lines to be drawn in accordance with the submission provided by the Australian Heritage Commission to the Minister of Environment, in order to protect all remaining rock carvings.
 - (d). Establish an independent authority to conduct a complete inventory of the Dampier Archipelago to assess the islands' cultural heritage value, in consultation with both Indigenous and scientific authorities.
 - (e). Develop a management plan in open consultation between all parties, including State and Federal governments, Indigenous groups, conservationists and industry. Consultation with Indigenous groups must include a determination of sacred sites on the Archipelago area. The management plan must also be able to implement best-practice world heritage management, ensuring that the rock carvings, when made public, can be safely and respectfully visited in perpetuity.
3. Offers to host an exhibition of the heritage rock carvings at the Bondi Pavilion or another suitable site to highlight the potential loss from the Burrup Peninsular and liaise and cooperate with GetUp Action For Australia on their campaign.

4. That this exhibition is appropriately publicised in Council's communications.
5. Write to the Minister for the Environment, Malcolm Turnbull explaining Council's position.

BACKGROUND

The Burrup Peninsular rock artworks in Western Australia are the oldest and largest collection of rock carvings in the world –some of them are six times older than the Pyramids! The little-known indigenous site includes one of the earliest identified images of a human face and the now-extinct Tasmanian Tiger. The rock carvings are a very important part of Australia's indigenous cultural history.

This significant site is presently at risk of being destroyed. The Federal and Western Australian Governments are currently considering whether to allow the construction of a \$5 billion gas processing plant at the peninsula by Woodside, an oil and gas exploration and production company.

At present the Burrup Peninsular rock artworks are not registered on the National Heritage Listing. The site has been identified by the Australian Heritage Council as an area of cultural significance and it is currently being reviewed for national heritage listing by the Federal Government. The Federal Environment Minister, Malcolm Turnbull claims he will make a decision by the middle of this year.

GetUp Action for Australia is an independent political movement, which has mounted a campaign to save the carvings. Late last year, thousands of their members rallied to save the Burrup rock carvings. I believe they have made good headway in highlighting this issue to the broader community. They are trying to galvanise as many people to lobby the Federal Government to heritage list this particular site.

In December 2006, GetUp were successful in getting 25,000 people to send a submission to the Federal Government, Western Australia Government and Woodside Petroleum to seek the heritage listing of the Burrup rock carvings. As a result, the Western Australian Government dropped their objection to heritage listing this site. Now GetUp has an online petition asking for an inclusive and consultative management plan to be developed and requesting that the Federal Government expedites its decision and heritage list this site.

I want Council to join this campaign and highlight this issue to our community. We must urge the Federal Government and our local Federal Member, Malcolm Turnbull to protect this site and relocate it to a more appropriate spot.