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AM - Turnbull targeted in rock art campaign

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Reporter: David Weber

TONY EASTLEY: Malcolm Turnbull will be fighting to keep his Sydney seat of Wentworth in the coming election, but he could be distracted from his campaigning by two pressing issues at opposite ends of the country.

The Friends of Australian Rock Art are worried about recent vandalism of artworks on Western Australia's Burrup Peninsula. The group has taken out an advertisement in today's *Wentworth Courier* community newspaper in New South Wales.

It says residents should call on the minister and demand an inquiry into the heritage values of ancient rock art on the Pilbara coast. While he is coming to grips with that issue, Mr Turnbull also has to decide whether the Government will give the go ahead to the Gunns pulp mill in the Tamar Valley in Tasmania.

David Weber reports from Perth.

DAVID WEBER: The panel that's been vandalised features rock carvings depicting kangaroos and fish. The artwork is thousands of years old. The WA Director of the Minerals Policy Institute, Robin Chapple, says some kind of metal tool has been used.

ROBIN CHAPPLE: This has been an absolute deliberate attempt to mark up the panel. And those markings are now there for at least the next 10,000 years,

DAVID WEBER: The Federal Government has already announced heritage protection for 99 per cent of the rock art across the Dampier Archipelago, including the Burrup Peninsula.

Robin Chapple:

ROBIN CHAPPLE: It is humankind's prehistory. Out there, there is motifs and material that date back 27,000 to 30,000 years, possibly the first human faces ever replicated on the planet.

DAVID WEBER: But the heritage-listed area does not include land where Woodside is proposing an LNG (liquefied natural gas) plant.

Robin Chapple says the Federal Environment Minister can still encourage Woodside to change its preferred location. He says the advertisement in the *Wentworth Courier*

calls on residents to show their support.

ROBIN CHAPPLE: By placing the advertisement, which is a half-page ad in the one paper that's in that area, calling on the minister to review the State's decisions, is a very valid attempt to ensure that the values of the Burrup are retained.

DAVID WEBER: Is it a difficult message to get across, given that it would be only a few people in the area of Malcolm Turnbull's seat that may have even seen the rock art?

ROBIN CHAPPLE: I would think so at one level, but we have to remember that there's been a significant campaign in relation to the Gunns activity in Tasmania going on in that electorate. And it's quite clear that that electorate is now extremely marginal.

DAVID WEBER: Mr Chapple says Mr Turnbull should agree to the specific review requested by the Wong-goo-tt-oo, an Indigenous group opposed to the location of the LNG plant.

Wong-goo-tt-oo elder, Wilfred Hicks, is critical of those Indigenous people working with Woodside, advising on relocating rock art.

WILFRED HICKS: I talk to people around the community, and they tell me, "What the hell is happening on the Burrup? Why are they doing this?"

DAVID WEBER: What do you think about the people that are working with Woodside?

WILFRED HICKS: I think they're sick in the bloody head, simple as that. Because if they knew anything about their heritage, they wouldn't be doing it.

TONY EASTLEY: Wong-goo-tt-oo elder, Wilfred Hicks, speaking to David Weber.

The Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull was unavailable for an interview, but a spokeswoman said the Pluto proposal will be given careful and considered consideration.

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