

Senseless vandals destroy ancient art with crude drawings

By Ben Cranston

BURRUP rock art has another enemy with a petroglyph of major importance desecrated on the Burrup Peninsula by locals, while Aboriginal and Green groups continue their battle to protect the ancient carvings.

Pictured on page 7 is a recent scratching made over one of the most impressive examples of rock art in the region near Conzinc Bay, according to Minerals Policy Institute WA director Robin Chapple.

"I understand this desecration was discovered on or about the middle of September and this panel is considered one of the most significant panels in the area of the

Conzinc Bay," Mr Chapple said.

"This, I would suspect, has to be put down to one of the locals, as it is in an area that requires the use of a 4WD to get over the Jump Up.

"It is tantamount to the Taliban's destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas or the slashing of a Van Gogh."

Mr Chapple said this was the latest in a long line of vandalism that was a growing issue on the Burrup as local industry continued to expand.

"There are currently no constraints or management of the National Heritage area and until sites are protected by either the Federal or State Governments, access should be removed from the northern heritage

areas and known major rock art valleys," he said.

"The State laws can ascribe a \$20,000 maximum fine. Investigations by the police and evidence from the public must be used to apprehend the imbecile who perpetrated this act."

The Friends of Australian Rock Art group is so incensed by the vandalism it has taken out an advertisement in a Wentworth newspaper.

The move was a strategic one with Federal Environment Minister fighting to retain the Wentworth seat at the next election.

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Turnbull on notice as election looms

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THE advertisement told residents the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo people had recently asked Mr Turnbull to establish an inquiry under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act into the heritage values of rock art on Woodside's Pluto Site B.

Labor Candidate for Wentworth, George Newhouse, last week restated his support for protecting the Burrup Peninsula and congratulated the Friends of Australian Rock Art for raising the issue locally through their advertisement.

"I strongly support the actions of the Friends of Australian Rock Art Inc," he said.

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

"Is this position held by ALP leadership team?" asked Greens spokesman Scott Ludlam who questioned whether the Australian Labor Party leadership team supported Mr Newhouse on the issue.

"Where do Kevin Rudd and Peter Garrett stand on this issue?" asked Mr Ludlam.

"The Carpenter Government has been obstinate in its refusal to consider alternative industrial development sites away from the Burrup."

"If a future Rudd Government commits to immediate protection of the Burrup that would be a breakthrough indeed."



BEFORE AND AFTER: Above, in 1997 before the senseless destruction of rock art 10 years later, below.

