

Turnbull gives go-ahead for destruction of ancient Aboriginal art

Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull has rejected an application by Aboriginal custodians of WA's Burrup Peninsula (the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo people) for protection of their world heritage rock art. After obtaining Turnbull's approval for the Woodside Pluto project on the last day of parliament, Friday October 12, the company is currently removing/destroying approximately 200 rock art panels on its Pluto B lease to make way for an LNG plant in the heart of the Burrup.

At stake are 200 examples of Aboriginal rock art, some of the pieces up to 30,000 years old.

Assistant Environment Minister John Cobb said he was "not satisfied that Site B is a significant Aboriginal area within the meaning of the Act", despite detailed submissions from the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo on the area's heritage values, the opinion of leading archaeologists that the Burrup is the world's oldest and largest rock art gallery, and the fact that the Burrup is the only Australian site listed on the World Monument Fund's list of the world's 100 most endangered cultural monuments, which includes Macchu Pichu and Angkor Wat.

Turnbull and his assistant minister also refused to consider the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo people's request for the Pluto project to be relocated to other commercially viable locations available nearby which would not impact on their cultural heritage.

After rejecting the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo native title group application to have this area declared a Significant Aboriginal Area, Turnbull added insult to injury, suggesting there would be minimum targets for Indigenous participation in the project. They could take part in the destruction of their own heritage!

WA Greens Senator and environment spokesperson Rachel Siewert said, "This government would bulldoze the Great Pyramid if it stood in the way of economic development.

"The farce of this situation is that the government could have easily ensured that this development went ahead in an area that did not threaten rock art."

Traditional owner representative Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo Elder Wilfred Hicks described it as "one of the worst incidents of the destruction of Aboriginal heritage and world class rock art". (Quotes from *The Koori Mail*)

FARA will continue to oppose the decision and any destruction of the rock art. The group is taking legal advice on Woodside's plans to remove the art.

For more information and to join the campaign visit the Stand Up for the Burrup website: www.standupfortheburrup.com