

Department probes report Burrup standing stone was moved

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The Department of Indigenous Affairs is investigating claims that oil and gas giant Woodside has illegally moved an Aboriginal standing stone after it was discovered in the company's Pluto Area B project area on the Burrup Peninsula this month.

Department acting director general Benita Cattalini said on Tuesday that an officer would travel to the Pluto B site this week to "follow up a report of suggested standing stones being discovered in the area".

"Woodside Petroleum will provide the Department of Indigenous Affairs with a full report on this matter shortly," she said.

Standing stones, the National Trust says, are elongated natural stones that have been placed intentionally in an upright position, often on ridge crests and other prominent points, and can be associated with ceremonies.

It is understood that the standing stone in question was found in an area where development is taking place.

A Woodside spokesman said the area had been subject to three different surveys which did not find this particular standing stone. An examination by an independent archaeologist the day after it was discovered on July 16 found it had no cultural significance.

"The archaeologist's advice is that the rock had only recently been placed there," he said. "The archaeologist advised work should proceed."

The Woodside spokesman said he did not know the size of the stone or what happened to it.

It is understood the Federal Department of Environment was told about the rock's discovery and it was not of any archaeological significance.

Friends of Aboriginal Rock Art spokesman Robin Chapple said Woodside should not have touched or moved the stone until a thorough investigation was done.

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