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Concerns in rock art science

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Some archaeologists take an interest in rock art. This paper is intended to facilitate their appreciation of some of the difficulties that may be encountered through introducing archaeological modelling dynamics and epistemology into rock art science. The collaboration between archaeologists and rock art scientists is contingent upon communication: scientists seem sometimes incapable of explaining their epistemological premises effectively to archaeologists, and archaeologists have unrealistic expectations of scientific methodology, which can lead to over-interpretation of results, and to disillusionment. There are a variety of other problems, often apparently attributable to a lack of communication. This paper is an attempt to communicate, and to clarify some issues that I feel need to be canvassed.

These rather brief and superficial comments are not intended, in any way whatsoever, to belittle the great contribution archaeologists have made to rock art science. I would be very disappointed if my comments were seen as negative or discouraging. Rock art science is a field in its own right, and in the same way as archaeologists or astronomers or chemists surely are entitled to clarify their position relative to the practitioners of other disciplines, rock art scientists have I believe the same right. Some of the greatest and most distinguished rock art scientists are of course archaeologists, and especially so in Australia, but it is equally true that many archaeologists are practically uninformed about the field of rock art research. Since there is considerable overlap between these fields, or at least they share certain common borders, it is surely useful to reach an understanding of what each other's concerns, priorities and motivations are. I ask readers to see my comments in this light, and I ask archaeologists to respond constructively.

About petroglyph tools

The stone tools that were used in making percussion petroglyphs have been observed ethnographically, and researchers in Australia and other countries have found them for a long time (Bednarik 1998). At major petroglyph galleries around the world, a fair number of such tools have been studied. Some have even been used in replication experiments (e.g. Savvateyev 1976). Expertise exists in identifying such tools with great confidence, derived from replication work and detailed studies of the tools in question. Just as one tends to find stone tools in hunter-forager occupation sites, or quarry blanks and mining traces in sites of pre-Historic mineral extraction, petroglyph tools should occur at most percussion petroglyph sites. Where later sedimentation has taken place next to carved rock faces

and pavements, as is often the case, one would expect to find such tools in stratigraphic contexts. Strata containing them may well comprise datable material (quartz or feldspar grains, charcoal etc.), which could then be used to estimate the time when these tools were used, i.e. when some of the petroglyphs were made. In such situations archaeology could make a valuable contribution to rock art science.

Around the world, many hundreds of archaeological excavations have been undertaken near petroglyph sites, but petroglyph tools have generally not been reported from them (there are a very few notable exceptions, however). This suggests that they were usually not recognised as artefacts, and discarded with the spoil material. The amount of damage this is likely to have caused to rock art science is incalculable. Even from the archaeological point of view, these tools would have been the most important archaeological finds at the site, as they would have helped to link its archaeology with its rock art. It is therefore most unfortunate that this lack of knowledge has caused such damage to the research potential of petroglyph sites.

There are numerous cases on record (e.g. many dozens of excavations in one small part of just one valley of Portugal; Aubry et al. 1997; Zilhão et al. 1997) in which a principal purpose of the excavation was precisely the potential of linking the rock art with the archaeological deposit. This was usually attempted on the basis of seeking petroglyphs below ground level, in the hope that they would provide the means of minimum dating of the rock art. At a very few sites worldwide, e.g. in France, Canada and Australia, this did succeed, but it must be remembered that a minimum date does not provide an age estimate, only a *terminus post quem* date. Stratified petroglyph tools, on the other hand, can provide valid estimates of the times when petroglyphs were made at the site. Moreover, they are significantly more likely to be found than petroglyphs below ground level.

So in searching for concealed rock art to secure minimum dating of petroglyphs we have discarded the evidence that would have given us valid dating evidence, in favour of searching, usually in vain, for the ever elusive but inconclusive evidence (Swartz 1997a, b). In the process we have usually destroyed the most important archaeological evidence at the sites in question.

What archaeologists therefore need to know about petroglyphs and the tools used to make them is that they must not excavate at or near petroglyph sites, unless they can secure the support of an experienced rock art scientist who can identify such tools.

About rock art dating

There are a number of approaches available to estimating the age of rock art. Since the advent of 'direct dating', which has been developed over the past two decades, archaeologists have consistently misunderstood what it is and what it provides (Bednarik 1996, 2002). 'Direct dating' of rock art is incapable of providing actual ages. Rock art scientists cannot 'date' rock art, and if any did claim that they could actually do this they would be charlatans. All that scientists can do is provide falsifiable data concerning the age of rock art. Such data are in some fashion related to the true age of a motif, but the precise nature of this relationship is often very difficult to ascertain, and almost invariably misinterpreted by archaeologists. The reason is that these results are offered as refutable propositions, not as some sort of 'facts', which is how archaeologists often interpret them. I offer some examples.

Most 'direct dates' currently available from European rock art attributed to the Pleistocene are radiocarbon dates obtained from charcoal pigment. The only exceptions are the results from the Côa valley (Bednarik 1995a; Watchman 1995) and the radiocarbon ages from soot patches in Chauvet Cave (Clottes et al. 1995). It has been claimed or implied numerous times that these 'direct dates' from charcoal pigment provide secure dating of the painted cave sites in question (e.g. Bahn 1993). Here we have a classical example of archaeologically misinterpreted 'direct dates'. None of these radiocarbon determinations tell us the age of the art they were taken from. Assuming that there is no laboratory error or contamination—and ignoring that about one third of these dates must be statistically expected to be 'false' (i.e. they should be outside the tolerance margins), as well as several further qualifications (Ward and Wilson 1978; Wilson and Ward 1981; Ward 1994)—what such results tell us is that physicists have proposed that the charcoal that was used in the picture is from the wood of a tree that assimilated atmospheric carbon dioxide (i.e. lived) at the time in question. These results do not tell us when the wood was oxidised, nor do they tell us when the charcoal was collected and ground to a pigment. If the radiometric age of pigment did indicate the age of a painting, then red paintings made with haematite would be millions of years old. The same logic applies in both cases. Clearly pigment is usually not of the same age as a painting. Paint is, but archaeologists often confuse the terms 'paint' (or paint residue) and 'pigment'. These are two different terms, and they are certainly not synonymous. Pigment is merely a component of paint (others are solvent, binders, extenders, fillers, and numerous types of incidental inclusions).

To cite another recent example, let us consider the 'direct dating' evidence from rock varnishes, which has been championed by Dorn (1983, 1986, 1993; Dorn et al. 1992; Dorn and Whitley 1984) for many years. There is again no doubt that the evidence is 'direct', in that its physical relationship with the rock art is beyond dispute. However, once again the nexus between the analytical result and the true age of the feature in question is so complex that it seems almost impossible to quantify. After conducting extensive analytical and nanostratigraphical work during the late 1960s and through the 1970s, I arrived at the view that such ferromanganous accretionary deposits, which one often finds covering petroglyphs, cannot be dated by these simple means. My principal objection was that I found a wealth of organic matter in all weathering and accretionary zones I examined (Bednarik 1979). Organic matter is even present in apparently unaltered rock, but its concentration increases greatly towards the surface. This is an open system, and in the case of rock varnish and similar phenomena, we have long known that micro-organisms can recycle such crust material, and that the stratigraphy of such accretions is highly variable at

a microscopic scale. Nevertheless, subsequent to my findings, Dorn proceeded to use such deposits routinely for rock art dating, first with his cation-ratio method, and after this became increasingly unpopular (particularly once Watchman [1992] failed to duplicate his results), by AMS radiocarbon analysis of bulk samples. After defending these methods for many years against the criticisms by Watchman, myself and others, he suddenly conceded that all his analytical results are doubtful, and that he had made two critical mistakes in all of the 15 years of his work. He admitted that both of these mistakes were classic errors of how 'the paradigm or mental framework that one operates under can blind a researcher' (Dorn 1996, 1997). At about the same time, Beck et al. (1997) presented their critical review of another aspect of Dorn's work (see Beck et al. 1998; Dorn 1998; Dalton 1998; Malakoff 1998).

Over the past twenty years, many archaeologists have relied heavily on Dorn's results, and I sense that archaeologists are responding to his 'change of perception', as he calls it, by losing confidence in 'direct dating' methodology. This reaction would not be attributable to Dorn's errors, which were entirely predictable (as my 1979 paper shows), but to false expectations of archaeologists. 'Direct dating' does not produce 'better' 'dates' than traditional stylistic or archaeological dating methods, it merely produces falsifiable results, which are thus scientific. This does not necessarily make them better, safer, more reliable or more precise than archaeological/stylistic approaches. 'Direct dating' is not immune to human error, and it has not produced one single 'absolute' date for rock art. It is simply a *different* way of acquiring age information about rock art.

About the taphonomy of rock art

The most powerful theoretical tool developed in archaeology is taphonomic logic. This is not a theory; it is a framework of testing whether a particular archaeological proposition is worth pursuing further. It shares with taphonomy only its name, having been derived from that discipline initially, but the emphasis is on the operative word 'logic'. Rock art, like fossil bones, stone tools, pollen grains and the stars in the heaven, has been subjected to a variety of processes that are usually a function of time (in some complex fashion), and that have led to the present form of the evidence (Bednarik 1994a). One of the characteristics rock art shares with archaeological (and other) remains is that the composition and distribution of specific forms of evidence have been systematically distorted over time, and that this distortion increases with age. It may sound simplistic to say so, but it is perfectly correct to state that the distortion increases to the point where it cancels out the relevance of statistical consideration. In practical terms, statistics of Pleistocene rock art are irrelevant in most cases.

Everything that ever happened in the archaeological past constituted an 'archaeological event'. The probability of any detectable evidence of such an event surviving to the present time can never be 100% or 0%, but it can vary greatly between these two figures. To understand taphonomic logic we best begin by considering that, of much more than 99.9% of all archaeological events, no trace survived for more than one second. Of the still innumerable remaining instances, evidence survives in the long term only for a tiny fraction of one-millionth of a per cent. Of this, only an infinitesimal portion has been recovered by archaeology, of which an even smaller part has been correctly construed. The combined dynamics of preservation, recovery and interpretation all involve biases that are not just massive, they are also systematic in most cases. To treat any recovered sample of such evidence as if it were a random sample of some perceived entity is a basic fallacy; archaeology cannot recover random samples of *any* class of evidence. Therefore the qualitative and quantitative distortions inherent in pre-

ervation, recovery and interpretation need to be accounted for.

The same applies to rock art, which is also a severely truncated and altered record that has been extensively misinterpreted. Taphonomic susceptibilities can create whole profiles of false rock art traditions (Bednarik 1994b) and thereby lead to systematic misinterpretation of corpora, chronological sequences and spatial distributions. For instance, McCarthy's (1988) petroglyph sequence for Australia, based essentially on early deep outlines and late shallow 'intaglios' (filled-in motifs), is very likely attributable to taphonomic determinants. The filled-in figures are inevitably sgraffiti (i.e. produced by the sgraffito method), which often become indistinguishable once repatination is completed. The petroglyphs that survive longest are generally cupules and deep linear grooves. They are also the oldest found worldwide, dating back to the Middle and even Lower Palaeolithic (Bednarik 1995b). This, too, is hardly a coincidence, it is a very predictable distribution pattern and thus probably a taphonomic phenomenon. It means, in effect, that there is a high probability that other rock art was also produced at such early times. Whenever the oldest examples we have of a class of evidence are the ones that would be expected to survive longest, it should be assumed that they are neither the oldest made, nor the only ones made at the time in question.

The logic this is based on has been explained and can be quantified as an integral function (Bednarik 1994b). Its effect is best described by example. We have no direct evidence of hominid navigation older than about 8500 years, but we have indirect evidence of it that is about one hundred times as old (Bednarik 1997). In this case, the phenomenon category's 'taphonomic threshold' is the early Holocene, and its 'taphonomic lag' is the time between that point in time and the historical commencement of the phenomenon in question. In other words, in this example the taphonomic lag is about 99% of the phenomenon category's historical duration. The perdurable evidence forms of most archaeological events have taphonomic lags of between 99% and 100%, very few fall significantly under 99%, hence it is most inappropriate for archaeology to assume that it can know the beginnings of most human practices. *Any* statistical interpretation of rock art that is not qualified by taphonomic logic is grossly misleading.

About discriminating rock art and natural markings

The form of rock art that was produced by some reductive process is called petroglyphs, but its reliable identification has been problematic. Archaeologists have frequently identified other types of rock markings as petroglyphs, or petroglyphs as natural markings of some kind (Bednarik 1994a). Among the non-rock art markings that have most frequently been misidentified are animal markings in limestone caves, xenoliths, rillenkarren and rock marks made by machinery. On portable objects, numerous types of markings have been archaeologically misidentified as art, including mycorrhizal grooves, animal claw marks, elastic movements marks, tooth marks on bones, cracks and solution marks, incidental tool marks, and various types of natural perforations, such as those caused by parasitic organisms (on shells) or gastric acids (on bone). In some cases, archaeologists have consistently refused to accept the corrections of specialists, and have insisted that their identifications are correct. There have been instances of portable natural markings being described as mobiliary art, and of man-made non-utilitarian markings being declared to be natural. It can readily be demonstrated that the discrimination of anthropic and non-anthropic rock markings is a subject for specialist attention.

In the case of rock art, this is a complex aspect that must be considered within its context, the related weathering and modification processes affecting rock surfaces (e.g. speleothem precipitation in caves), and not within the context of traditional

archaeological preoccupations. Many archaeologists lack the training or field experience of judging the results of these processes, and some have been found to be very defensive when corrected.

There have also been problems in misidentifying natural colouration of rock surfaces as rock paintings, but these are far less common. Nevertheless, some spectacular instances do exist and have been discussed, including in Australia. In general, however, the problems are far more common in the identification of engravings and other petroglyphs. When even the slightest doubts are possible it is always advisable to consult a specialist rock art scientist. After all, to provide published dating evidence from some coloured rock surface that turns out to be a natural discolouration, as has happened on at least two occasions, is not just embarrassing for the researchers concerned, it is also a waste of limited resources and publishing space. It is similarly embarrassing when some natural rock markings are pronounced to be petroglyphs, and declared a protected archaeological site, as has happened on occasion (e.g. in Victoria).

About interpreting rock art

Some archaeologists tell us what is depicted in rock art, and what archaeological conclusions we can draw from *their* identifications. My children were able to tell me what they thought was depicted in rock art soon after they learnt to speak, and I found their identifications more illuminating than those of archaeologists. This is because their perception was less conditioned than that of academic sophisticates, who have undergone massive conditioning throughout their lives.

When a person who is not a participant in the cultural system the rock artist in question belonged to tells us what he or she thinks is depicted in rock art, or what the meaning of a rock picture is, we are in fact learning about how that person relates to physical reality, and how that person's occipital visual centre reacts to input information. Whether the person in question is an infant or an archaeologist is not particularly relevant to the veracity of the perception. If one were a cognitive psychologist and had decided to study the perception of archaeologists, one would certainly take a keen interest in such information. To the rock art scientist, however, it is of very limited relevance, because such a practitioner would in most cases only be interested in the perception and cognition of the rock artist, or of those who shared the perception of reality the rock artist possessed. In short, it would be helpful if researchers, to whom the cultural and iconographic norms and values of the rock artists are alien and usually incomprehensible, would abstain from cluttering publications with their opinions of what is depicted in rock art, and what rock art means. There is, for instance, no reason to assume that an archaeological or other academic training would equip a person to better understand the meaning of rock art (Macintosh 1977). It is appropriate to cite here the founder of modern Australian archaeology: 'A prehistorian may infer methods of application or techniques of engraving, from observation, but comment concerning motivation and meaning is beyond the scope of normal archaeological activities' (Mullvaney 1969: 174). We are most fortunate in Australia in that we have, in our society, people who still possess the knowledge to interpret and understand the meaning of rock art, and they are the only ones whose opinion counts in this instance. Unfortunately, Western researchers are not capable of truly comprehending alternative worldviews, and in the translation of probably untranslatable information, meanings can only be understood in corrupted forms. Throughout history, non-Western societies have always had to make allowances for the ideological righteousness of Westerners, and that, sadly, also applies to much of what passes as 'science'.

About favourite models

Moreover, the epistemological dynamics of Western 'science' tend to foster in researchers a predilection towards preferring evidence that is thought to support some favoured model, or that is thought to refute some model they dislike. In the hard sciences, this is much less of a problem than in disciplines that are generally based on non-refutable propositions. This is so because propositions in the hard sciences are usually readily testable. Rock art research certainly has experienced more than its fair share of enthusiastically defended or attacked models, and the great difficulties rock art specialists sometimes experience with ardently defended but non-refutable and thus unscientific archaeological views need to be highlighted. They are often attributable to some of the issues highlighted above, and to the lack of refutability of archaeological propositions generally.

There is, however, a very simple and readily available method of testing whether an archaeological proposition is worth considering further. The first role of taphonomic logic is precisely to eliminate the need to pursue enticing but ultimately worthless propositions in archaeology, as well as in rock art research and any other disciplines that deal with events and phenomena of the past. Most propositions can be formulated in such a way that their transit through the filter of taphonomic logic is possible, and after emerging from such treatment those that have no future within a scientific epistemology can easily be identified.

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Dampier report April 2003

The previous copy of the *AURA Newsletter* (August 2002) provided an outline of the circumstances that led to the campaign by IFRAO and AURA to save the rock art of the Dampier Archipelago, Western Australia. It also contained a useful historical account of the background issues, beginning with the massacres of 1868 and ending with the important breakthrough of 25 July 2002. On that day, the Western Australian government announced its first concession on the issue, the proclamation of a committee to oversee a study of rock art deterioration at Dampier.

AURA Newsletter has been directly involved in this campaign since 1994, when it published a four-point manifesto designed to secure the survival of the Dampier petroglyphs (Bednarik 1994). These demands were essentially:

1. That Murujuga (the 'Burrup Peninsula') be nominated for the World Heritage List.
2. The return of all unencumbered land to Aboriginal control.
3. The provision of proper site management.
4. The perpetual conservation and cultural integrity of the rock art.

I have voiced the last-mentioned demand in one form or another since the late 1960s, but this more detailed agenda was formulated much later, because of the complete inaction by successive state governments in addressing the question of the Dampier rock art. In 1995 and 1996, there were good reasons to expect that much of the problem might be resolved with the establishment of the Maitland Heavy Industrial Estate. Although the state government in 1996 approved this proposal, delays and a change of government led to procrastination over several years. In 2001 our hopes were brutally quashed when the Gallop government announced massive expansion plans for the Murujuga industrial complex. This was the last straw for IFRAO and I realised that more energetic action was called for. With the beginning of 2002, the government was informed of IFRAO's demands, but it took another five months before it began to accept the effectiveness of this campaign. A concerted media campaign in Western Australia, combined with sustained political action and the establishment of a web-site convinced the government that more than cosmetic action might be required this time around. Therefore, it began looking at making concessions around the middle of 2002.

Since then it has made further concessions. Our nomination of Dampier to the Endangered Sites List of the National Trust of Australia was accepted in August. In October, the Premier of Western Australia advised IFRAO of the proposed composition of its committee to oversee the four-year rock art deterioration study, and also that the Department of Indigenous Affairs is in the process of developing the terms of reference for a general Dampier heritage management plan. Besides the effects of the emissions on the rock art, this would address the management of the rock art salvage compound at Hearson Cove, the management of all other rock art in the area, aspects of tourism and the employment of heritage rangers.

This proposal, then, went some way towards satisfying some of the demands first raised eight years earlier. It fell short in several areas, however, and the government continued with its plans to locate further industry on Murujuga. IFRAO then made application to the National Native Title Tribunal to open the Dampier claims to public submissions, citing public interest in the rock art. The Tribunal was about to consider an application from the state government to compulsorily acquire the land of Murujuga from the traditional owners. This was itself a cynical

exercise; after all, the government had established a huge industrial complex on the land since the 1960s. As a result of IFRAO's request the Tribunal decided to call for public submissions, receiving a total of seventy-two in under two weeks, from Australia and internationally. Many of them were substantial documents; IFRAO's own submission was eighty-three pages long (Bednarik 2002a).

IFRAO also petitioned the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage and received a positive response from The Hon. Dr David Kemp. He encouraged us to pursue a nomination to World Heritage status as well as listing under Australia's new national heritage legislation. Next, IFRAO nominated the Dampier rock art to the list of the '100 Most Threatened Monuments in the World', which is maintained by the World Monuments Fund.

It now became obvious to the state government that it was being maneuvered into a situation that would spell its defeat on the issue. The NNTT took an unprecedented interest in the Dampier case and its acting chairman inspected the rock art personally. If the NNTT were to block the government's endeavours, as seemed increasingly likely, the latter would find itself in a legal quagmire. It had technically admitted, by applying for compulsory acquisition, that it did not own the land. It would have had to pay compensation to the yet undetermined true owners for past use of the land, and its plans for further development would be in jeopardy. It had to act decisively, and there was only one option left to it: to settle with the three claimants before the NNTT made a ruling. The NNTT was pre-empted just days before the deadline.

The tables had thus turned completely. Only in May 2002, the government had given the claimants a heavy-handed ultimatum: accept a settlement of \$16 million by 31 May or receive nothing. Seven months later it pleaded with the third claimant group to accept an offer so generous that its terms remain undisclosed. The intervention of IFRAO and its allies, especially the W.A. Greens, had changed the game completely. The government no longer called the shots; the indigenous and environmentalist parties set the agenda now.

During late 2002, several huge projects at Dampier had received the green light by the Department of Environmental Protection, but already there was a cloud gathering over these approvals. The foolish decision by the government not to proceed with the alternative Maitland Industrial Estate had rendered it without a contingency plan, it now relied entirely on its political influence to push through an agenda that faced problems on many fronts. Our potential allies, the militant trade unions, now began to flex their muscles at Dampier, and they may become players that are more important later on. The environmentalist lobby groups also weighed in and a campaign to destroy the environmental credentials of the state government that had gained office primarily on the back of environmental promises commenced. Suddenly, with the beginning of 2003, the Western Australian state government found itself attacked on all fronts by 'green' interests, mostly over issues of toxic emissions, contamination and pro-developers bias. The most salient cases concerned the Brookdale toxic dump issue and the Ningaloo Reef, but there were over a dozen further controversies in this vein, from Broome in the north to Pemberton in the far south. By the end of January, the State Premier saw himself forced to fire the Director of the Department of Environmental Protection, which had admitted to the most appalling blunders concerning chemical analyses of contaminating substances. At the same time, an independent technical report commissioned by the local shire of

Roebourne was released (Astron 2002), showing the sheer incompetence of the state's planners. Some of the Murujuga sites earmarked for constructing multi-billion-dollar petrochemical plants are in fact subject to occasional surge tides and should thus not be built on at all. Moreover, the government had claimed that the Maitland infrastructure would cost \$300 million, compared with the \$221 million for the limited Murujuga areas. In fact, the likely cost of the Maitland Estate was \$100 million, less than half the cost of the highly controversial Murujuga Estate. To make matters worse, the true cost of establishing this industry on Murujuga is not the \$136 million earmarked by the state government, plus the \$85 million contributed by the federal government, but it is in fact much higher. Already three of the proponents, Syntroleum, Burrup Fertiliser and Liguigaz, have indicated that they will need additional taxpayer's support, and two of these companies have now quit their projects.

In realising that the campaign initiated by IFRAO was a great deal more effective than it had anticipated, the government now made new concessions, effectively promising or implying to meet most of our original demands. As part of the announcement of the deal it had struck with the indigenous claimants, it undertook to establish a conservation reserve covering 62% of Murujuga, i.e. all land not affected by industrial and related development. Title to this land will be transferred to the native title claimants and leased back to the state, to be jointly managed by the claimants and the Department of Conservation and Land Management. The government also undertook to conduct the management of the heritage sites properly, including those on industrial land. It even went as far as mentioning the possibility of nominating the Dampier Archipelago to the World Heritage List. Here is the list of the government proposals for protecting the Dampier rock art, announced on 16 January 2003:

- Prohibition on ground-disturbing activities in certain areas.
- Conducting a comprehensive heritage survey over those parts of the industrial estates that have not yet been surveyed.
- The recording and cataloguing of any rock art that is to be disturbed.
- An expert committee to assess the effects of industrial emissions on rock art.
- The potential for a further committee to be established to consider whether an approach should be made to the Commonwealth Government to nominate some or all of the Dampier Archipelago, including the Burrup non-industrial land, to the World Heritage List.
- The establishment of a conservation reserve covering over 60 per cent of the Burrup Peninsula, including the areas of the Burrup with the highest concentrations of rock art, to be jointly managed by the State and native title claimant groups.
- A \$A10.8 million commitment to manage the conservation reserve.
- Ensuring that comprehensive heritage surveys have been conducted over the Burrup Industrial Precinct within five years, regardless of whether or not those areas will be the subjects of development activities in the near future.
- Ensuring that no disturbance whatsoever takes place in certain parts of the Burrup Industrial Precinct that have been identified by native title claimants as containing significant Aboriginal heritage sites.
- Ensuring that, if any disturbance of sites is authorised in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act, those sites are appropriately recorded, described and photographed.

Assuming that all these conditions were met and properly implemented, only one of the original IFRAO demands would remain: that the perpetual conservation and cultural integrity of the rock art be guaranteed. The measures agreed to will go some way towards proper protection but there remain two vital issues to be resolved. First, the government will continue its practice, introduced in the 1980s, of destroying sites by relocating rock art boulders to make room for industrial development. Bearing in mind that between 20 and 25 per cent of the Murujuga rock art has already been destroyed by development work since 1964 (Bednarik 2002b), and that there is no reason why with a little co-operation rock art sites could not be avoided in the siting of structures, this should not be negotiable. The removal of rock art directly contravenes the *Burra Charter* (especially the concept of 'site fabric', which is a key element of the ICOMOS policy of preservation). It is also strongly resisted by Traditional Custodians of the rock art to whom it is inseparable from its ceremonial or topographical setting. The rampant state vandalism at Dampier for almost four decades has to stop now, and if the government continues to shirk its legislative obligation to protect the rock art effectively, then the government has to go, and not the rock art. We are left with no choice but to plan its defeat in the next state election (in 2005), in the same way as IFRAO has dealt with two successive recalcitrant governments in Portugal. The means necessary to achieve this are presently being established in a number of ways.

The second remaining concern (assuming that the state government will co-operate on the World Heritage nomination) is the issue of the detrimental effects of gaseous and fine particle emissions on the rock surfaces in the entire Archipelago. The government has addressed this by establishing a four-year study of the problem, a problem I have studied since 1967 (Bednarik 2002b). Instead of combining this measure with a moratorium on increasing emissions until findings are tabled, it tries to proceed with measures that will yield a trebling of these emissions. It would be unrealistic to expect that the new industrial plants would be shut down if the government-sponsored study confirmed the gradual deterioration of the rock patination that is gradually bleaching the petroglyphs. Therefore, this study might be valuable for future issues of this kind, but it comes too late for the Murujuga rock art. In that sense, it is therefore a hypocritical measure and yet another form of procrastination.

The government, while intent on appearing to make concessions, has not met the crucial demand: the relocation of all new industries to alternative sites. On 7 March 2003, it announced that there would be no further projects admitted to Murujuga, besides the seven current developers (Methanex, Liguigaz, Syntroleum, Japan DME, DME International, Dampier Nitrogen and one unnamed company). Its earlier plans to locate a liquefied natural gas plant of the Gorgon Joint Venture Partners were now abandoned. All new projects would be located elsewhere, and the government was in the process of evaluating the Maitland Estate, West Intercourse Island, Cape Lambert, Boodarie and Onslow as potential sites. The necessity of locating new developments elsewhere arises, as the government admits, because there is no suitable land left in Murujuga, yet there is to be a great deal more industrial expansion in the general region.

This immediately raises the crucial issue. If it is necessary to establish other industrial sites, as we have argued all along, why could these alternative sites not be used for all projects yet to be constructed? The only reason the government offers is that these other sites would not be available in time, yet if it had not procrastinated on this issue all along, alternative sites would certainly be on line now. This dilemma is entirely of the government's own making.

Within days of the government's concession of 7 March, the largest of the proponents, Methanex, announced that its \$2 billion methanol plant in Dampier, touted to be the largest in the world, was 'put on hold'. This is a significant defeat for the government in various ways. First, it spells the immediate loss of the \$85 million of Commonwealth funds Methanex had secured for infrastructure. This money, I believe, was the government's main motivation in resisting the move to Maitland, yet it was now lost together with the principal proponent. Second, Methanex stated unambiguously that it would still be willing to consider an alternative site in north-western Australia, but that the costs of developing at Dampier were simply too high. Perhaps it also did not relish the thought of constructing an expensive plant in an area at Hearson Cove that happens to be prone to occasional flooding (Astron 2002). Perhaps it would have appreciated being warned about that by the people at the Department of Industry and Resources it had been dealing with. Third, it now became obvious that this Department, which had been handling all issues concerned with Dampier, had been inept all along, and calls for an inquiry into its role began to appear in early March.

It should be of concern to the rock art research community that this very same Department is responsible for the Rock Art Monitoring Management Committee (RAMM). This was established in response to my findings that the emissions of the Dampier industrial complex are adversely affecting the area's rock art (Bednarik 2002b). Its terms of reference are to investigate the effects of the Dampier development and to suggest mitigation measures if appropriate. The members of the RAMM Committee are:

- Associate Professor Frank Murray, EPA Board Member (Chair)
- Warren Tacey, Department of Environmental Protection, EPA Service Unit
- Dennis Callaghan, Department of Indigenous Affairs
- Dr Ian MacLeod, W.A. Museum
- Mance Lofgren, W.A. Museum
- The late Dr Patricia Vinnicombe
- David Fleming, W.A. Chemistry Centre
- Meath Hammond, Woodside Energy Ltd
- Philip Haydock, Yamatji Land and Sea Council
- Kevin Richards, Shire of Roebourne

Now that it has become so apparent that the Department under whose authority this Committee operates has been grossly negligent, it should be of concern that this very same department is implementing the important rock art deterioration-monitoring program. Following the untimely death of Dr Vinnicombe on 30 March 2003, only two of the remaining members of the RAMM Committee have experience with rock art, and none has ever studied the deterioration of the Dampier rock art. The concept of a conflict of interest seems to be foreign to the Department of Industry and Resources, and it is clear that the RAMM Committee's independence is greatly compromised. It should operate under a more independent authority, such as the National Trust (W.A.) or the Commonwealth Department for the Environment and Heritage.

The announcement of a workshop by the RAMM Committee in late March led to an incredible development. Three days before this event was to be convened, Woodside Energy Ltd admitted that it had made a serious error in calculating the crucial emissions of oxides of nitrogen from its Dampier plant. They are in fact 11 000 tonnes per year, about twice as high as the level listed in the National Pollutant Inventory for years (5800 tonnes). This development seriously questions not only

the integrity of the company, but more importantly, it points to an appalling state of affairs within the Department of Environmental Protection, which monitors these data. Woodside's 'error' refers not just to the last year, or any specific year of reporting; it refers to all years since the Dampier plant began operation. As a reasonable estimate, since that time Woodside has in round figures released a staggering quarter of a million tonnes of nitrogen oxides, which form nitrous acid with water, into the environment of the Dampier Archipelago. For the Murujuga rock art, this would average perhaps in the order of 10 kg per square metre of rock surface! To suggest that the effect of this onslaught on the ferromanganous surface accretions forming the rock art should be negligible is preposterous. After all, this occurs against a background of a distinctly acidic environment, caused by hundreds of millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions over a couple of decades, as well as emissions of sulphur oxides and other acidic gases.

There was now a flurry of activity concerning Murujuga. The scientists attending the Dampier workshop declared the government funding for the emissions study entirely inadequate, and they expressed grave fears for the Dampier rock art. Speakers at the workshop said that little was known about the rock art, the weathering of the Dampier rocks and the local weather patterns. This made their task a challenge in the short time of four years, particularly in the absence of baseline data. In this they ignored the fact that such baseline data has been collected since 1967 and that my condition study of Murujuga rock art has been conducted over a period of thirty-five years, effectively extending the duration of their monitoring project by 875 per cent.

In another development I had asked Dr David Kemp MP, the federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, to request the Western Australian government to facilitate the World Heritage nomination. In late March he wrote to his State counterpart, Dr Judy Edwards MLA, advising her of the Commonwealth Government's interest in considering the inclusion of the Dampier petroglyphs in the World Heritage List.

On 7 April, the coalition of organisations dedicated to saving the Murujuga rock art organised the Murujuga Forum in Perth, under the auspices of the National Trust of Australia (W.A.). Here, at last, representatives of most of the key organisations that had been collaborating for some time to preserve the Dampier rock art got together. The consensus they found to exist among them did not come as a great surprise, they had been intensively communicating for up to a year. What was surprising, however, was the strength of support that came from unexpected quarters. In particular, the Leader of the Opposition in Western Australia, Colin Barnett MLA, presented a well-researched expose of why he categorically opposes the siting of more industry at Murujuga, why he advocates the establishment of the Maitland Industrial Estate, and why he considers the preservation of the Dampier rock art essential to the state. Bearing in mind that his chances of winning the next state election are excellent, his persuasive and strongly enunciated policy statement immediately brings to mind the fate of the Cõa rock art, which after all was also decided at the ballot box.

Mr Barnett also accepted unequivocally that the Dampier rock art precinct represents the largest concentration of petroglyphs in the world, that it is the greatest cultural heritage property in Australia and that the state has an ironclad obligation to preserve it for all future.

For the moment, the state government is very much on the defensive over its handling of the protection of the Murujuga rock art. It still advocates the destruction of more of the irreplaceable rock art, having sanctioned the destruction of between 20 and 25 per cent of it already. Yet several of the companies it

has attempted to lure to the Dampier Archipelago have already pulled out of the respective projects, partly because they do not wish to be labelled rock art vandals, partly because the costs of establishing structures on Murujuga are greater than those at alternative locations. Moreover, some of the sites allocated to them by the government have been found to be subject to inundation by surge tides—an incredible admission when one considers the almost unlimited supply of eminently suitable land available nearby on the mainland. Finally, it emerged at the Murujuga Forum that the committee the government has appointed to establish whether the industrial emissions are causing deterioration of the rock art is likely to be ineffective in influencing the course of industrial development in the region. To make matters worse, one of the main polluters in the area, Woodside Energy Ltd, has admitted to having made a very significant error in calculating the rate of their nitrogen oxide emissions. This has exposed yet another festering problem, the fact that the Department of Environmental Protection seems incapable of monitoring the level of emissions by major polluters. It is apparent from this admission that the values reported in the *National Pollutant Inventory*, maintained by Environment Australia, may reflect quite meaningless random figures that are not effectively checked by anyone. This follows the result of a series of internal reviews of the W.A. Department of Environmental Protection that led to the finding that this ‘organisation is

incapable of fulfilling its functions’ (Southwell 2003). Such scandalous disclosures about the ineptness of government departments will continue until Australia develops a culture of fostering the influence of NGOs in public life.

Robert G. Bednarik

President of IFRAO

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The history of the Dampier issue – instalment 2

(See *AURA Newsletter* 19/2: 15–16 for the period from 1868 to mid-2002)

25 July - The government announces that it will conduct an independent four-year study of the deterioration R. G. Bednarik has already studied for 35 years. It is not clear how the wishes of companies wanting to commence their projects in the meantime will be accommodated. While this vindicates the concerns that led to this campaign in the first place, it is also clear that the government still does not comprehend the implications of its inaction concerning Maitland.

8 August 2002 - A 25-year contract to annually supply 3.3 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas to China is announced by Woodside, the operator of the North-West Shelf joint venture. Valued between \$18–25 billion, this is the largest single export contract in Australia’s history, involving the creation of some 80 000 new jobs.

22 August 2002 - The National Trust of Australia places Murujuga (Burrup Peninsula) on its list of Endangered Sites of Australia.

26 August 2002 - IFRAO petitions the National Native Title Tribunal to ensure the return of Murujuga to the local Aboriginal people, and registers a strong public interest in the fate of the property. This submission leads to the NNTT’s decision, ten weeks later, to call for public submissions on the case.

16 October 2002 - The Premier of Western Australia advises IFRAO that he has named an independent committee of nine members, the Rock Art Monitoring Reference Committee, to oversee a study of the deterioration of Dampier rock art. This committee will report in four years’ time. Meanwhile, however, industrial development will continue at Dampier as planned.

23 October 2002 - The Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, The Hon. Dr David Kemp, encourages IFRAO to pursue nomination of the Dampier petroglyphs to the UNESCO World Heritage list, and also encourages IFRAO to nominate it for national heritage listing as soon as the presently proposed Australian Heritage Council becomes operative.

24 October 2002 - On behalf of IFRAO and AURA, R. G. Bednarik nominates the Dampier rock art to be listed as one of the world’s WMF 100 Most Threatened Monuments to the World Monuments Watch program of the World Monuments Fund. Currently there are no properties in Australia on the list of most threatened sites.

6 November 2002 - The National Native Title Tribunal, which is the Australian legal court deciding matters of indigenous rights, makes an unprecedented ruling in the case of the Dampier rock art. Based on the submission by IFRAO, it rules that the ‘public interest’ has not been taken into account adequately in the case of Aboriginal custodians versus the State, and it calls for public submissions in this case.

19 December 2002 - Robin Chapple MLC of the W.A. Greens introduces the *Burrup Peninsula (Crown Land) Bill* in parliament, designed to protect the Dampier Archipelago from further encroachment by industrial facilities by complicating the prescribed procedure of approvals.

20 December 2002 - The establishment of a \$630 million ammonia plant on Murujuga is announced.

29 December 2002 - The world’s largest methanol plant, to be built by Methanex of Canada, receives clearance from the Environment Minister Judy Edwards to establish on Murujuga.

16 January 2003 - After the National Native Titles Tribunal receives seventy-two submissions within a few days (up to 83 pages long), the government secures the agreement of three claimant groups with a large pay-out, claiming its plans at Dampier are no longer impeded. This effectively renders the NNTT case irrelevant.

19 January 2003 - A giant desalination plant is announced for Murujuga (Burrup Peninsula).

Late January 2003 - The ASTRON Report, commissioned by the Shire of Roebourne, is presented. It compares the Maitland and Burrup industrial estates and finds that the Maitland infrastructure will not cost \$300 million, as claimed by the government, but only \$100 million. It also reports that the Burrup sites are subject to surge tides of 2-3 m. In comparing the two options it comes out heavily in Maitland's favour for engineering reasons.

29 January 2003 - The Premier of Western Australia, Dr Geoff Gallop, sacks the head of the Department of Environmental Protection, Roger Payne. His superior, Environment Minister Judy Edwards, is under pressure to resign.

13 February 2003 - The State Development Minister of Western Australia, Clive Brown, announces the terms of reference for the government's Dampier Rock Art Monitoring Management Committee, and installs EPA board member Associate Professor Frank Murray as chair of the ten-member committee.

25 February 2003 - The State Opposition Leader, Colin Barnett MLA, leads parliamentary attacks against the Environment Minister, Dr Judy Edwards MLA, culminating in a no-confidence vote that is narrowly defeated.

7 March 2003 - State Development Minister Clive Brown MLA announces that the Government would evaluate the best location for future gas processing projects in the Pilbara. He concedes that all suitable land on Murujuga/Burrup Peninsula has now been allocated and that the Government would assess a number of alternative locations for new projects. These would include the Maitland Estate, West Intercourse Island, Cape Lambert, Boodarie and Onslow.

13 March 2003 - Methanex Corporation of Vancouver announces that its proposed \$2 billion methanol plant for Murujuga/Burrup will not proceed. The company remains interested in establishing a plant in north-western Australia, but not at Dampier. Its withdrawal follows that of another Dampier proponent, Syntroleum, after rejection of a request for substantial government support. A third of the prospective Murujuga companies has indicated that it is also seeking further state subsidies.

14 March 2003 - In response to the corporate withdrawals from the Murujuga development, Robin Chapple MLC calls for an inquiry into the incompetence of the Department of Industry and Resources, which has effectively managed the public interest in these affairs.

15 March 2003 - Colin Barnett MLA, the W.A. State Opposition Leader, states that if Maitland were in place, the Methanex project would not have been lost, and that he would move immediately on developing Maitland were he the premier. He also argues that the rock art at Dampier is the most significant heritage issue the state has ever faced, and that 'the corporate entities are not going to want to be seen in conflict with the rock art'.

26 March 2003 - Woodside, the operator of the North West Shelf Venture, announces that it has made a major error in calculating the emissions of oxides of nitrogen at its Dampier gas plant. The error relates to the mass of corrosive emission, which is conceded to be about twice as great as listed in the National Pollutant Inventory. This provides a plausible explanation for the deterioration rate of rock accretions at Dampier, which seemed to be in excess of what would be expected from previously published emission levels.

28 March 2003 - The Hon. Dr David Kemp MP, Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage, advises IFRAO that he has informed his Western Australian counterpart, Dr Judy Edwards MLA, that the Commonwealth Government is interested in including the Dampier rock art in the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

29 March 2003 - The Murujuga (Burrup) Rock Art Monitoring Research Workshop is conducted in Dampier. Subsequent newspaper reports emphasise that the participating scientists are very concerned about the survival of the rock art, and that they consider the funding provided for monitoring work as grossly inadequate.

30 March 2003 - Dr Patricia Vinnicombe, a member of the Dampier Rock Art Monitoring Management Committee, collapses after the Dampier workshop and dies before arriving in Karratha Hospital. Dr Vinnicombe, a distinguished rock art scientist of international reputation, has been closely involved in the study of Dampier rock art. She has written one of the two scientific papers upon which the current phase of the Dampier campaign is based (*Rock Art Research* 2002, Volume 19, pp. 3-27).

4 April 2003 - The Western Australian Department of Environmental Protection, which has been the object of severe criticism for several months, admits that a series of internal reviews show that it is incapable of fulfilling its functions. It is to be completely restructured and renamed.

7 April 2003 - The Murujuga Forum is held at the Alexander Library Theatre in Perth, under the auspices of the National Trust of Australia (W.A.). This is a forum of representatives of the key organisations opposed to the destruction of the Murujuga rock art, including representatives of the local Indigenous communities. The Forum is addressed by the State Leader of the Opposition, The Hon. Colin Barnett MLA, who pledges his complete support in securing the relocation of planned industrial developments from the Dampier Archipelago to the Maitland Estate.

Please visit <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/dampier/web/index.html>

Letters to the Premier of Western Australia

Since the commencement of the IFRAO/AURA campaign to save the petroglyphs of Dampier, there have been hundreds of letters received by the Premier of Western Australia concerning the destruction of the rock art. A small sample of these letters is presented here.

Dear Dr Gallop,

Australia is known in Russia as a civilised country where rock art sites are under the protection of state and federal governments, except in Western Australia. Since rock art is the country's only major indigenous or genuinely Australian cultural material asset, this is most appropriate. We know that Australia lacks the palaces, castles, temples, pyramids and other historical structures that underpin the cultural consciousness of older countries, but it more than makes up for this with its unique indigenous culture, the most ancient in the world that still exists.

But the plans of your government, Mr Premier, to obliterate the largest petroglyph complex in the world question your commitment to the preservation of this invaluable and irreplaceable patrimony. Your determination to build a large petrochemical complex in its place, in a state that has one of the lowest population densities on this planet and offers alternative nearby locations of almost unlimited area, is of the greatest international concern. You have tens of thousands of square kilometres of unused land available for petrochemical industry. You persist in locating Australia's greatest polluter in precisely the same place as one of the world's greatest cultural properties.

Moreover, we clearly understand that after decades of haggling with the rightful owners of this rock art, the local Aborigines, the property is no closer to repatriation than it was since your government massacred the local indigenes in 1868.

Mr Premier, we are trying very hard not to condemn your action on the basis of the evidence before us, but if the leader of a country that has done so much harm to the people it almost exterminated persists in obliterating the last vestiges of these people today, we are obliged to speak out. The world will not stand by idly and watch your government complete its policy of eradicating indigenous culture. The National Trust of Australia has nominated the rock art of the Burrup Peninsula for its list of endangered sites of Australia. This danger is not from natural attrition, it is not from war or poverty, and it is not even caused by greed. It is entirely caused by your government, and the only logical explanation we can find for this is that the destruction of Aboriginal rock art seems intentional.

Please relocate this development to one of the alternative sites you have and return the Burrup Peninsula to the Aboriginal people.

Sincerely,

Academician Valentine Yanin
Chief of the Archaeology Department
Moscow State University

Dear Dr Gallop,

I have been appalled to hear of the proposed destruction of much of the rock art of the Burrup Peninsula by the expanding of petrochemical processing plants. The fact that this is an official project of your government makes it much worse, especially as there are other possibilities for locating the plants.

The Burrup Peninsula rock art is reputed to be the largest corpus of petroglyphs in the world, thought to number somewhere between 250 000 and one million motifs. Therefore, it is a heritage of major importance. It also represents the beliefs, the customs and art of the Aborigines who have lived there for many thousands of years. All this should and must be preserved, as it does not only belong to the present owners of the land: it

belongs to all of Humankind and we are all concerned.

I am therefore appealing to you to reconsider the ill-advised decisions that were taken and to relocate those industrial plants where they can do no harm to what is a cultural treasure of world importance that one ought to be proud of.

Dr Jean Clottes

Conservateur General du Patrimoine, France

Dear Dr Gallop,

In my role of scholar in archaeology, specialising in rock art, and as IFRAO-UNESCO Liaison Officer and UISPP-UNESCO Chair for the Prehistoric Art Symposia, I had the privilege in 2000 to survey some of the rock art of Australia. During a joint mission with other international specialists, I travelled extensively in your country, subsequent to the IFRAO International Rock Art Congress organised by AURA in Alice Springs.

The rock art patrimony of Australia is unique, beautiful, very important for the past of humanity, and most particularly it constitutes the main original cultural heritage of this continent. The conservation, preservation and popularisation of this priceless heritage are vital. It is also an inalienable right for the governance and particularly for you, as Premier, an obligation to the nations and peoples in the whole world.

During my recent survey, I have noted that Australia has some problems of environmental conservation of the archaeological or ethnographic sites: e.g. shelters with rock art are not adequately protected from bush fires. In the Australian Congress in Alice Springs I chaired a symposium about 'Rock Art and Sustainable Development Plans'; and during the presentations, discussions and round table debates the main conservation problems with Australian rock art were analysed.

In your state, in Western Australia, in the Dampier Archipelago, the Burrup Peninsula is now witnessing the greatest crime against cultural heritage ever seen in the world: the progressive massive destruction of the archaeological sites with the oldest rock art, and of the related environment and landscape, and the fragile equilibrium with the Aboriginal communities that are the traditional depository of the ancient history and knowledge and whose members are the natural custodians of your original patrimony.

The Burrup rock art is one of the greatest heritage assets of the world, but in almost forty years, the Western Australian Government has not undertaken an inventory of the rock art, or any study to curb its destruction. It has consistently refused to protect the rock art and to return it to the possession of its rightful owners.

Your determination to put a large petrochemical industrial complex in its place, in a state that has one of the lowest population densities on the planet and offers alternative nearby locations of almost unlimited area, is of the greatest concern.

The National Trust of Australia has nominated the rock art of the Burrup Peninsula for its list of endangered sites of Australia. This danger is not from natural attrition, it is not from war or poverty, it is not even caused by greed. It is entirely caused by a political decision that promotes the destruction of Aboriginal heritage.

I am sure that my reflections are only a small part of our knowledge about your national patrimony, its value, the civil necessity to protect, to conserve and to inform your people—for

your country and for our world.

In my stated opinion, 'environment in general, and rock art in particular, should be considered as something we have borrowed from our children rather than inherited from our parents' (cf. Dario Seglie, 'Save Rock Art', Ripon University, USA, 1999).

If you were to review this matter, relocate the development to one of the alternative sites you have, return the Burrup Peninsula to the Aboriginal people and design a plan for a National Natural and Cultural Park, with the candidature for the inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List, I would be at your disposal to participate in independent scientific commission.

Awaiting your vital opinion, in accordance with your own state legislation, about this crucial international, federal and state problem, I send you my best wishes for your—surely enlightened—decision.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dr Dario Seglie

Director, Museum of Prehistoric Art, Italy
IFRAO/UNESCO Liaison Officer

Dear Dr Gallop,

The Aboriginal rock art sites of the Burrup Peninsula are recognised as one of the World's largest collections of indigenous rock art—a region worthy of World Heritage recognition and preservation. The entire region begs a thorough inventory and documentation of its cultural resources and a vigorous management plan to preserve these resources for future generations of Aborigines and world citizens alike.

The current proposal to locate the Burrup Peninsula petrochemical processing plants in the midst of the Aboriginal rock art sites is a travesty. The destruction of the cultural value of the peninsula deprives local Aborigines of their rightful heritage and deprives Western Australia of the potential for the development of appropriate cultural tourism in the region.

Clearly there are other suitable alternatives for the location of the petrochemical industry which we understand have been placed before you for consideration. Needless destruction of Aboriginal patrimony should never be allowed. Destruction of the Burrup Peninsula rock art and the degradation of the surrounding environment must not be allowed to take place.

The American Rock Art Research Association joins its voice with others around the World in an outcry against this looming desecration and beseeches your government to act on behalf of the protection of this irreplaceable World Heritage.

Respectfully,

Leigh Marymor

Vice President & Acting Conservation Committee Chairperson
American Rock Art Research Association

Dear Dr Gallop,

We are referring to the plans of your government for greatly expanding the Burrup Peninsula petrochemical processing plants in order to exploit the offshore natural gas deposits. This small but extremely significant area contains one of the world's largest concentrations of rock art, and alternative and much more suitable industrial sites should be available nearby. We understand that you have been advised to locate the new industry at Maitland Estate, by individuals and organisations ranging from ICOMOS to Prince Charles, by conservationists, scientists, politicians, local residents, but most importantly, by the rightful owner of the rock art, the local Aboriginal communities.

We are greatly concerned that you are persisting with this course of typical modern kind of vandalising your country's cultural heritage. If the Burrup Peninsula contained any valuable resource one could understand your determination, but as this

site consists only of huge piles of rocks, your course of action is apparently calculated to destroy this very major vestige of great Aboriginal culture. We know that your government has already approved the destruction of 20-25% of the area's rock art since 1964, and recent scientific evidence suggests that most of the rock art will have disappeared by the end of this century.

The Burrup rock art is one of the Greatest Heritage Assets of the world, which any civilised country would wish to call its own, yet you treat it with such complete contempt. In almost forty years, your government has not undertaken an inventory of the rock art, or any study to curb its destruction. It has consistently refused to protect the rock art and to return it to the possession of its rightful owners. We appeal to you to consider how history will judge your actions, and to reconsider your policy of turning the Burrup Peninsula into a wasteland.

Yours sincerely,

Members of Moscow Centre of Rock Art and Bioindication

Dear Dr Gallop,

I was shocked to learn of your Government's plans greatly to expand the Burrup Peninsula petrochemical processing plants in association with the development of offshore natural gas deposits.

I studied the art of the Burrup Peninsula during the 1970s, and am familiar with the more detailed work of other anthropologists, including Kingsley Palmer and archaeologists, including Enzo Virili and Michel Lorblanchet. Palmer's work demonstrated that the Burrup art continues to be of significance to local Aboriginal communities (his work also, incidentally, confirmed the earlier findings of research by McCarthy and Tindale at Port Hedland). Lorblanchet obtained a date of 18 510 years before present from an ancient Aboriginal campsite adjacent to weathered engravings (petroglyphs), showing that some of the Burrup petroglyphs are among the oldest rock art in Australia. Changes in the art, and in Aboriginal camping patterns, also demonstrate how Australia's indigenous people adapted to the rising sea level after the last Ice Age, while some of the engravings were undoubtedly made within the last one hundred years.

The rock art of the Burrup Peninsula came to public attention in the 1960s, with the development of the Hamersley Iron and Dampier Salt companies. Threatened sites were first published by Virili, an employee of the Dampier Salt Company. The art is now internationally famous. Having worked with ICOMOS on sites nominated for the World Heritage List, I have no doubt that the nomination of the Peninsula as a World Heritage Site would be favourably received. There is absolutely no reason for this industrial complex to be situated on the Burrup Peninsula (Murujuga), where already between 20–25% of the petroglyphs have been destroyed since 1964 by similar industrial estates. I appeal to you and your government to relocate the petrochemical processing plants to a less valuable, and less vulnerable area.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Robert Layton

Anthropology, University of Durham, United Kingdom

Dear Dr Gallop,

I am writing this letter to you in regard to understandings I have about the construction of a petrochemical processing plant on the Burrup Peninsula (Murujuga).

I might initially state that the destruction of huge numbers of ancient and irreplaceable prehistoric design elements simply reduces data that can make us understand our past development. I find it hard to comprehend why one would not be disheartened by such policy. Why should remains that have survived for thousands of years simply to be wiped out for immediate expe-

diency? Be this as it may I realise that many people are not concerned with such intellectual issues and put other matters first.

So therefore, let us only consider the pragmatics of this situation. As I understand it, there is extensive adjacent land just as suitable for the plant as the location presently earmarked. WHY NOT HAVE THE PLANT AND THE ROCK ART TOO? I assume there is important industrial use of the plant, but now you have preserved an extraordinary archaeological feature that would have worldwide interest. It could be developed and made into a tourist centre. Now Western Australia would have greater development and MORE INCOME. I would think your role as the Premier of Western Australia would be to increase both wealth and the cultural resources of your state. It seems to me this is a win, win situation.

This letter is sent in the spirit of and co-operation and positive outlook.

Sincerely yours,

Professor B. K. Swartz, Jr.
Chairman, ACASPP, U.S.A.

Dear Dr Gallop,

As in many other countries in South America, indigenous people have been decimated in Argentina since the precise moment they came into contact with Europeans. An intermittent chain of unfortunate historical events has since caused the disappearance of natives in most of the regions of our country.

Remains from the past allow archaeologists today to reconstruct some of that precious history before the 15th century A.D. A significant part of these remains are rock art (paintings, petroglyphs and geoglyphs), expressions which constitute one of the richest evidence to reconstruct some part of that indigenous past.

Viewing the past from the present, we can hardly understand the multitude of political, social and economic motivations that caused such a huge genocide. But today we can even less comprehend the conscious destruction of those aboriginal remains that are the last remaining contact we have with our ancestors. Any careless industrial development can lead a cultural genocide.

Archaeologists in Argentina, as other social-cultural organisations and NGOs, have recently become aware of the determination of your government to put a petrochemical industrial complex in Western Australia (an area that shares so many similarities with the south-eastern part of our country, the Patagonia region), placing under serious danger one of the largest rock art complexes in the world, on the Burrup Peninsula (Murujuga).

Australia is considered as an example in heritage sites management by the rest of the world. This new plan is entirely contrary the exemplary Australian policies in the other states. It is very important to relocate this development to stop causing more damage and destruction in the future and to return the land in question to the traditional owners.

Yours sincerely,

Lic. Maria Mercedes Podestá
President, Sociedad Argentina de Antropología

Dear Dr Gallop:

Over the past few months, I have received a considerable body of data from colleagues showing that one of the world's premier prehistoric rock art concentrations is threatened with destruction in your territory. It would be my hope that you would avail

yourself of this profound moment of opportunity, and save it. The entire world of archaeology, quite electric in the public mind, would praise you forever for such an historic act. I needn't tell you that the condoning of such an unparalleled destruction would raise the anger of the scientific world, precisely as the Taliban did in the destruction of sacred Buddhist monuments.

Respectfully yours,

Professor Jack Steinbring
Past President, IFRAO

Dear Dr Gallop,

The rock art and megalithic arrangements of the Burrup Peninsula are under threat of destruction from your government. This site is as important to the world as Stonehenge or Machu Picchu; its petroglyphs are many thousands of years old. Among them are pictures of thylacines, an animal species exterminated by British settlers. In the Flying Foam Massacre on the Burrup Peninsula, your ancestors almost exterminated the local Aboriginal tribe, and now your government has decided to destroy the rock art there as well. You intend to replace the Burrup sacred precinct with a conglomerate of gas processing plants that are to spew out hundreds of millions of tonnes of acidic gases.

The Burrup petroglyph complex is reputed to be the largest in the world. It needs the same protection as other cultural heritage properties of similar significance. Your government is obliged to provide this protection, not only by international treaties and conventions, and indeed in accordance with your own state legislation, but there are also moral grounds. Just as the British would never build a refinery next to Stonehenge, the people of Western Australia deserve that their own greatest heritage site be treated with the same consideration. Moreover, there appears to be no logistic or technical reason why this proposed industrial estate needs to be located in such a sensitive area.

We request that you locate the proposed development at an alternative site, which we understand is available to you, and that you develop a proper management plan for the Burrup Peninsula that guarantees the perpetual protection of the rock art.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dr Yu. A. Vedenin
Director, Russian Research Institute of Cultural and Natural Heritage

**If you desire to make your views on the
preservation of the Dampier rock art known
please write to:**

The Hon. Dr Geoff Gallop MLA
Premier of Western Australia
197 St George's Terrace
Perth, W.A. 6000
Australia

It is strongly recommended that a copy of any letter sent to Dr Gallop be also sent to the Opposition Leader, Mr Colin Barnett:

The Hon. Colin Barnett MLA
Parliament House
Perth, W.A. 6000, Australia
barnettc@loop.wa.gov.au

Dampier Petition comments

The following comments concerning the threat to the Dampier rock art are a small selection of those made by signatories of the 'Save Dampier rock art' Petition. We are grateful for the support of all signatories. If you have not signed the Petition as yet, please visit <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/users/dampier/index.html>, read the Petition and sign it. Many thanks!

The Burrup is the world's greatest rock art gallery, let's save it!
Cliff Holdom, Western Australia

Isn't wrecking beautiful things fun, especially when there's a dollar in it. **James Pillsbury, Western Australia**

I have personally visited many of the Dampier sites in 1992. They are of world-class quality and need to be preserved and protected as part of humanity's priceless heritage. **Professor Ekkehart Malotki, Arizona**

Rock art sites must be protected and preserved. **Professor Majeed Khan, Saudi Arabia**

Please take urgent measure to save this irreplaceable rock art corpus which is not only important to Australia but also to all of the world. **Professor Tang Huisheng, China**

The irreplaceable cannot be replaced! **Glenn Woodley, New South Wales**

As an editor of archaeological publications I have come to realise the great scientific and aesthetic value of rock art as well as its importance to indigenous communities. Once gone, lost forever. **Professor Monica Barnes, New York**

It is about time that all Australian governments (State & Federal) faced up to their responsibilities to undertake meaningful discussions with local Aboriginal Communities regarding the protection, documentation and preservation of Aboriginal rock art in Australia. This example is one of the most extreme of many throughout the country. **R. G. Gunn, Victoria**

In my role of Prehistoric Art Museum Director, IFRAO Italian Representative and UNESCO Liaison Officer, I completely share this Petition. **Professor Dario Seglie, Italy**

Would we bulldoze Stonehenge? Put Abu Simbel through the rock crusher? If we allow the Dampier sites to be damaged or destroyed, we are no better than those who blew up the Buddha statues in Afghanistan are. **Geoffrey H. Drew, Queensland**

For a country with a long standing reputation/joke as having no culture, it is in fact a tragedy, that one of the oldest cultures and evidence of its existence, is threatened, yet again by white mans greed. **Professor Martin William Hamblen, England**

Destruction of cultural heritage is a crime! **Dr Dirk Huyge, Belgium**

Australia has come to be recognised as a leader in the international effort to interpret and protect rock art. I urge the government of Western Australia to continue to demonstrate the foresight to preserve this precious cultural heritage. **Professor Paul Faulstich, California**

I beseech you to preserve this irreplaceable, precious part of your national heritage and of the world's heritage. **Jane Kolber, Arizona**

Lets govern, not be dictated to by bureaucrats. **Fran Westmore, Western Australia**

Act in haste; repent at leisure. I implore the W.A. government to reconsider its options in regard to the rock art legacy on the Burrup. **Associate Professor Bert Roberts, New South Wales**

I believe that there is every reason to utilise the available mainland site. To allow, or even worse, cause the destruction of such an array of art is an act of contempt to all humanity. **Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith, AM, Victoria**

This is a social, cultural and environmental disaster. **Erin O'Donnell, South Australia**

Rock art belongs to all of us! A great nation like Australia should respect the wishes of the traditional owners and preserve the area for our children and their children, forever. Stop this senseless development! **Professor Mila Simões de Abreu, Portugal**

Please save these precious and irreplaceable relics for future generations. There is no modern reason important enough to erase these recordings of our past. **Dr Michelle Holstein, California**

I strongly urge the Western Australian government to intervene on behalf of this important cultural heritage site. The international community will not let any threat such as the current Murujuga industrial plan go unnoticed. **Dr Reinaldo Morales Jr., Virginia**

Having visited the area in 1988, viewing and photographing some of these threatened petroglyphs, I find it inconceivable that any further destruction could be contemplated, particularly as a perfectly viable and economically preferable alternative already exists. Please reconsider. **Mary Haginikitas, Queensland**

The Hellenic Rock Art Centre fights together with AURA to stop the damage to the Humanity. **Professor George Dimitriadis, Greece**

The rock art in question belongs to everyone. It is our ancient human heritage. Whatever entities happen to own and/or control rock art sites are actually trustees, whether they realise this or not. They must be stewards and protectors of irreplaceable palaeoart. Under written and unwritten laws—they do not have the right to plunder and destroy these prehistoric treasure troves. Australian authorities must not allow the proposed development. They must mandate clean up of the current emissions to preserve the Dampier glyphs from pollution. And, officials must require the plant to move to where it will not negatively affect important cultural artefacts and life. **Will Schaleben, Colorado**

The loss of world-class rock art sites is a loss of cultural property, heritage, and information about humanity's past. Rock art is an important archaeological artefact for reconstructing the past and is increasingly being recognised as a valuable economic and cultural resource over time. Once it is gone however, it is gone. Industrial sites can be relocated. Rock art cannot. **Professor Kevin L. Callahan, Minnesota**

Stop state vandalism at Dampier rock art sites: it is just another form of state terrorism - against the common heritage of all mankind. **Dr Thomas Schultze-Westrum, Greece**

The world community rightly decried the Taliban's destruction of the monumental Buddhist carvings at Bamiyan. The world community must now express its collective outrage at the Government of Western Australia and those multinational companies who are prepared to damage and destroy ancient petroglyphs. **Irene Tallentire, Western Australia**

Would the government allow the demolition of the Boyd Gallery to make way for a factory? I think not. **Alex Falconer, Western Australia**

Australia being a leading country in rock art research, I cannot imagine that such a site could be destroyed. **Dr Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, France**

We cannot allow the destruction of any rock art anywhere in world. Please encourage others to sign. **Terry Eastlake, Queensland**

The proposal is outrageous, petition is excellent. **Celia Mary Gray, Western Australia**

This is nothing but government-sponsored cultural vandalism. Hardly the actions of a so-called civilised society. **Nick Brand, Scotland**

The WA and Australian governments have an opportunity to prove that they take a unique and irreplaceable inheritance seriously. Industrial activity on the Burrup will last for the blink of an eye compared to Aboriginal culture there, yet the legacy of tens of thousands of years of culture is under serious threat due to a short term, short sighted and ultimately shallow economic imperative. **Mike Bodsworth, Western Australia**

Once a mistake has been made, no number of apologies can undo the damage. **Dee Jones, England**

I strongly endorse the views expressed in this petition. An open but discerning mind reinforced by a little courage can go a long way towards making the world a better place for the generations to come. **Jocelyne Arnoux, Martinique**

The West Australian Government needs to honour the environmental platform on which they were elected and protect this fabulous heritage site while at the same time ensuring that greenhouse emissions are not increased in the state through the proposed petrochemical plant. The Dampier rock art site is an incredibly important heritage site to the Indigenous community, to the state of WA and internationally. It must be protected for future generations. **Renaë Jarman-Walker, Western Australia**

In the course of both professional and private travel I have made a number of visits to various rock art galleries on the Burrup as well as numerous other rock art sites both in Australia and overseas. I have seen nothing equivalent in abundance and diversity to the rock art of this district. I believe there is a strong case that could be made for the area to be nominated for World Heritage listing. **Greg Wallace, Western Australia**

The site needs World Heritage nomination ASAP. **David Pike, Western Australia**

Surely location of new industry on the mainland to reduce the risks to this irreplaceable site seems very little to ask. Once gone, that's it. No second chances. **Sharon Cather, England**

For the benefit of humanity, Dampier rock art should be saved from any kind of vandalism. **Professor Akira Hagiwara, Japan**

If we do nothing about our heritage now, there will be no heritage in the future. **Franci Vosloo, South Africa**

I remember the good example of the Portuguese Government about Foz Côa engravings. **Paulo Frederico F. Gonçalves, Portugal**

Save the past for the future. **Johanne Whitmore, Canada**

Australia has become a leader in the area of preservation and conservation of natural and cultural resources. To allow destruction of this area would be a step backwards. Do the right thing, Western Australia, move your industrial interests to Maitland. Hasn't enough Aboriginal heritage been lost already? **Garen R. Smith, U.S.A.**

When will WA realise what it has?! **Cath Drake, U.K.**

We will never understand our past if we set about erasing the records. It would be wilful destruction of a world heritage library. **Wallace Thornhill, Canberra**

An indication of a civilised society is that it has the intellectual and historical capacity to embrace and combine short-time

(industry) and long-time (ancient monuments) interests. Let that be so in the case of the government and people of Western Australia! **Professor Per H. Ramqvist, Sweden**

I am appalled by the proposal to expand industry on the Burrup Peninsula and I cannot conceive why industry should not be relocated to protect the world's largest art complex. It is a national treasure and its destruction will earn the State Government terrible opprobrium. It shows a callous and mean disregard of indigenous heritage as bad as the proposal to dam the Franklin or uranium-mine in Kakadu. **Dr Joe Dortch, Sydney**

This destruction of cultural heritage through government inaction on acid rain is disgusting. **Dr Ivars Reinfelds, Wolongong**

This is world heritage and we must look after it and allocate funds for preservation in accordance with Traditional Owner's requirements. **Peter Tremain, Albury**

I am familiar with the rock art, standing stones and other features of the Burrup-Dampier region and regard its full preservation as of the utmost importance. **Professor John Chappell, Canberra**

As a citizen of the World I feel no boundaries as to whom heritage belongs. The Dampier petroglyphs are an inheritance that enriches our life. They convey meanings about the world we live in and beyond as seen by a people we may have not yet understood. **Professor Joseph Magro Conti, Malta**

I have lived and camped on the Burrup for eight months and have extensive photographs of the incredible art there. I have also travelled around Australia and have never come across such a density of art in one small area; it is fantastic and must be preserved for future generations to marvel at! **Murray Simon, Perth**

I think Business should be respectful of the rightful owners of this land. Protecting this rock art gives our community priceless assets for the future. **Karen Branley, Perth**

If ever there was a time for the W.A. government to honour their commitment to the true believers this is it. Plain common sense and decency must prevail. **Quenten and Carol Jackson, Tom Price, W.A.**

Surely progress and development have a conscience also. No profit margin will justify this development if it means the loss of this place. The price is simply too high. **Gerard Niemoeller, Darwin**

I ran Karratha Backpackers for three years and in that time took countless numbers of Australian and overseas backpackers to the Burrup Peninsula to see the rock art. Their response to the experience was almost exclusively one of disbelief ... the vast majority had never heard about the Burrup or the rock art, and they couldn't believe an area as rich in Aboriginal culture as the Burrup is could be allowed to be destroyed in favour of industrial development. The area is very special and should be protected for future generations to experience. Our Anglo-Saxon ancestors have already killed off the Yaburara people who inhabited the region, so we should preserve what's left of our Aboriginal heritage in the area by restricting future industrial development of the Burrup Peninsula. At least to the point where it cannot affect any more Aboriginal sites in the area. **Barry O'Callaghan, Perth**

As a resident of the Pilbara, I am horrified at the thought of losing the rock art. It is culturally and historically important here and globally. It would be a loss to the world! **Amy Hollins, Karratha, W.A.**

CO₂ emissions from these industries should be curbed in line with the Kyoto Protocol. **Keith Cairns, Dampier, W.A.**

I have lived in this region since I was 11, and I've seen the desecration of these amazing historical sites over this time. Further 'trashing' of these places is a disgusting thought. The British government wouldn't build on the Stonehenge site, or the Chinese government wouldn't mine an area through the Great Wall of China, so why destroy one of Australia's prime historical sites for a bit of short-term money making? Develop our country by creating a new location. **Kate Bebensee, Wickham, W.A.**

The historical value of the artwork on the Burrup is unparalleled anywhere else in Australia—probably the world. How can our government trade this heritage for dollars when there is a viable option for siting industry at Maitland. Why is the government being so bloody minded about even considering Maitland? **Vicki Long, Karratha, W.A.**

I have witnessed the destruction first hand! **David Schoderboeck, Perth**

I believe in the power of the collective consciousness. We CAN create the desired outcome. I'm affirming—'Industry is excited about establishing on Maitland. The benefits, to all, are incalculable!' **Glenise L Slee, Karratha, W.A.**

Listen to the people who now (for a change), think beyond your time in office and put the dollar signs behind you! **Sharon Vertigan, Dampier, W.A.**

This is my backyard. What they are planning would make you cry. **Tina Bell, Karratha, W.A.**

Anyone who has ever sat and immersed themselves in the carvings on the heavy, hot, red rock will know that the Burrup is a unique place. If it were in Europe we wouldn't even be able to visit the site! **Geoff Hurst, Karratha, W.A.**

The NW of WA is a vast area. Why choose this one part with so much cultural and historical heritage? Living here in Karratha, people want industry, but not where it destroys irreplaceable art and history. **Sarah Lehane, Karratha, W.A.**

We are still at primary school, but are amazed that you grown-ups want to destroy what isn't yours to destroy. As Aussie kids, we say 'hear us if you won't listen to other grown-ups. Don't just wantonly destroy things—isn't that what you are always telling us off for?'. **Bethia and Ben Lehane, Karratha, W.A.**

History cannot be changed. It has happened. It cannot be erased. If the current Labor Government destroys part of our local history, they will be remembered for the wanton and mindless destruction of history itself. Some legacy! **Sue Rennie, Karratha, W.A.**

We have lived here for 22 years, and now I feel we'll have to move our family along with my three grandchildren, as I am afraid of the acid rain. We have enough cancers in the world now, lets prevent it, not welcome it. And we have all grown to love this place and call it HOME. Why should government force us to pack up and go somewhere else, when this is our home, our community. I bet the politicians wouldn't like to pack up their family when they have lived there for 22 years. I will be very angry if this goes through, and this won't be the last that the polliies hear from us. **Judie and Eddie Meredith, Karratha, W.A.**

My main concern is the beautiful rock art and what health problems pollution will create. The predominant wind patterns are not looking good for the towns of Dampier and Karratha for acid rain. Where are the buffer zones between these industries? What about the thermal/air pollution and damage to the fishing/pearling industry? Maitland is the best option. They don't want the Maitland Estate because it might cost a bit of money. The governments of Western Australia have been very slack in their forward planning. They have known about this for many years and have done

nothing. The Maitland Estate Environmental Report is available at the Shire of Roebourne Local History Collection at the Karratha Library. Maybe we should turn off the industries in the area for a few days and deprive them of the resources that keep this state afloat. I'm sure they couldn't build the Maitland Estate fast enough. **Joanne Pritchard, Karratha, W.A.**

Just how serious is the WA State Govt about protecting Aboriginal Heritage Sites. Dampier Archipelago should have been World Heritage listed long ago. NT Claimant groups—don't let the government buy you out, your history is priceless. **Barbara Glogner, Karratha, W.A.**

Maitland Industrial Estate is the correct place for industry. The petroglyphs on the Burrup Peninsula should have World Heritage listing. Any action that compromises the petroglyphs' integrity is immoral. **Nick and Debby Kemsley, Karratha**

Destroying the rock art is no different to the morons that blew up the Buddhas in Afghanistan!!! You DO have other options! This is something my children should have the right to be able to show their children. **Tracie McKay, Karratha**

It's about time that the government stopped pandering to the industrial companies. Enough with letting them dictate the terms. It's about time our government began to show some courage and protect the area and people they govern. YES, we want the industry, but at what future costs? The government has its head in the sand if it thinks this is going to blow over. Stop delaying and develop Maitland. But please, leave our Burrup alone. **Tanya Rinaldi, Karratha**

Will you listen to the voice of the people for once. **Michele Saw, Dampier**

It is time this country started recognising the inherent rights of Indigenous people. This is a heritage site we cannot afford to destroy! **Rachel Ritchie, Melbourne**

Labor voters all around the country celebrated this government's win in W.A. Their win was at least partly ensured by people glad of their 'green' stance on sensitive environmental issues in W.A. I have many friends in W.A. for whom this was the case. Please don't abuse the trust placed in you by facilitating and supporting this development. Save the Burrup Peninsula. **Sarah Eastwood, Melbourne**

Being a young half-Aboriginal, I say it is more than needed to save the art; it is a necessity. **Casey Butler, Perth**

This is typical of government, no ears, no eyes, only a mouth greedy for more. **Cassandra Burton, Perth**

Governments are too money hungry, when our land is all destroyed, only then will they want to give it back to us blackfellas. **Leanne Turvey, Perth**

My mother's father was born at the mouth of the Sherlock River further north of the Burrup. Her dad told her a Dreamtime story about the Burrup, which is very important to the area. To the government of this so-called Mighty State, how much more do you have to destroy that is irreplaceable to my Indigenous race. **Rodney Tittums, Carnarvon, W.A.**

As tangata whenua of Aotearoa, you have our full support. **Peter George Harrison, Kaitaia, New Zealand**

All crimes against Aboriginal people have been profitable and their rights always washed down the river. The non-Aboriginal culture of greed lives on. **Terry Whitby, Port Hedland, W.A.**

It's obvious—all roads lead to relocation! **Tristan Tipps, Sydney**

This type of material is protected everywhere else in the world.

Do it here. **Barry Oliver, Sydney**

Haven't you got enough to be sorry for??? **Claire Tinson,**

London

It will be a national disgrace if the W.A. government is allowed to get away with its plans for Burrup. **Louise Taylor, Cairns, Queensland**

Do non-indigenous Australians have the right to destroy the heritage of Indigenous Australians? I think not. This sort of vandalism has got to stop, before the culture of the Aboriginal people of Australia is completely gone. Australian Aboriginal culture is extremely rich, it must be preserved for Indigenous Australians, and all other Australians who have chosen to make this country their home. **Daryll Mulgrue, Cairns, Queensland**

I have had the privilege to see and appreciate a little of the rock art of Murujuga. I often hear that we in Australia have little 'history' to appreciate, but here at Murujuga is just such a great work of historical art. I implore you from the depth of my heart to care for this great treasure for now and into the deep future for all the peoples of the world. **Diane Johnson, Canberra**

This is a library created by Aboriginal ancestors. Its destruction is analogous to the destruction of the libraries at Constantinople during the Middle Ages. Please do not repeat history. **J. P. Mercado, Jacksonville, Florida**

We must hold our heads high when we tell our great-grandchildren how we saved this area of historical importance from the government and industrialists of the day. **David Bubb, Sydney**

I have walked the Burrup and explored its treasures. Apart from it being a botanical wonderland and important refuge for many species that otherwise wouldn't survive in the area; it's a beautiful place. I'd like to be able to show my kids some day. What's wrong with Maitland, and why is this government adopting a development-at-all-cost mentality like their political opponents? **Martin Henson, Perth**

Each time I return home new developments have taken place—some positive. The people who grew up around the Burrup appreciate what it has to offer, don't destroy it for the future generations! **Clint Rothe, Aberdeen, U.K.**

This is an international disgrace. Consideration needs to be given to the cultural, scientific and aesthetic value of the Burrup Peninsula petroglyphs in any development of the area!! **Alice Buhrich, Cairns, Queensland**

Rock art stands as, perhaps, the most universal vehicle of expression of our nature, as Modern Humans' descendants. It is our common memory, the sense of our existence. I am very distressed to learn about the dangers threatening Dampier rock art, and urge any decision-makers to review decisions that may lead to its destruction. Progress may only be achieved in respect to our memory. **Professor Luiz Oosterbeek, Tomar, Portugal**

Australian rock art is the most important in the world, because the people that made it are alive and they can explain to us the significance. **Adolfo Lopez Belando, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**

Why is it still so that those who want to save cultural heritage have to argue? **Dr Tilman Lenssen-Erz, Koeln, Germany**

I am amazed that an Australian government of the 21st century is being so short-sighted and red-necked. **Lorna McCraith, Liverpool, U.K.**

I doubt that you would desecrate or destroy your (or your ancestors) place of worship in the name of relatively short term industrial expansion. Sites of this magnitude are equal in stature to the cathedrals and churches of the Christian world. Think hard about the long-term effects of any rash acts! **Charles Bailey, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, USA**

We as human beings lose a little more of ourselves each year as our heritage is destroyed and culture eroded. **Nick Caravaglia, Park City, Utah, USA**

Australia still has many stunning natural and historical features left. Learn from mistakes made elsewhere in the world to maintain what beauty you have left. **Chris Aldous, Rome, Italy**

I am currently researching the Burrup as part of the assessment for a University unit. Two weeks ago I hadn't even heard of the Burrup. I am shocked to see what's happening up there. The petroglyphs are fantastic! They need to be protected. Maitland is certainly the better option. **Rebecca Symmans, Perth**

You are responsible for saving treasures of humanity. Your children will not forgive your mistakes. The international community is waiting for your right decision. **Sandis Laime, Cesis, Latvia**

I run tours in the Kimberley, licensed by CALM. Developments like this will put me and many other regional tour operators out of business. Tourism is forever. The destruction caused by the proposed project means that a permanent resource will be lost for a project that will be forgotten in 50 years. **Russell Willis, Darwin**

As a GLOBAL CITIZEN, I find it disgusting that you, 'the Western Australian Government', has taken the stance to deprive not just the indigenous peoples of your country but the rest of the world of this 'world heritage site', and hope that you see the light and protect this Aboriginal gift for future generations to enjoy! **Ian R. Warburton, U.K.**

We hopefully send our signs into space yet neglect signs sent to us. **Eric Coote, Mittagong, Australia**

Without our history we have no soul. **Maggie Abbott, Desert Hot Springs, California**

Would anyone dare to endanger a Christian church like this? Any in Australia is under 200 years old. These rocks go back scores of thousands of years, further than the pyramids. We allow our polities to turn us into a nation of cultureless vandals. **Diet Simon, Noosa Junction, Australia**

I visited the rock art, it was amazing. I have no intention of visiting the industrial complex. **Alex Peterson, Sydney**

TO BE CONTINUED

AURA Newsletter

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