

PRESS RELEASE

Environmental Protection Authority Legal Action

Robin Chapple an environmental consultant and member of People for Environmental Protection, a scientific and community based group, today instigated action against the Environmental Protection Authority. (Action included)

This action stems from the Environmental Protection Authority decision to withdraw from its assessment of the Department of Resource Development's Burrup Peninsula Land Use and Management Plan.

Mr Chapple referred (9th June 1994) the Burrup Peninsula Land Use and Management Plan to the Environmental Protection Authority under section 38.(1)(b)(ii) of the 1986 Environmental Protection Act and the referral as such was accepted by the E.P.A. The E.P.A. immediately recognised the outstanding value of the area and decided to formally assess it. They set the level of assessment at the second highest level / a Public Environmental Review.

This was a fitting assessment level as previously the Environmental Protection Authority had advised against a proposal by Pilbara 21 to develop the very same area proposed in the Burrup Peninsula Land Use and Management Plan by the Department of Resource Development:

"The fact that the northern portion of the Burrup Peninsula has high conservation value, is listed on the National Estate and protected under the Aboriginal Heritage Act has been overlooked. The conservation and heritage value of the Burrup Peninsular is so significant that the entire area should not be seen as available for future industrial development. A reasonable balance can be achieved and in this regard, the Authority believes there remains ample scope for future industrial use of the southern, less sensitive parts of the Burrup Peninsula".

Barry Carbon.

After questionable pressure of some nature from the Government or the Department of Resource Development the Environmental Protection Authority decided (Sunday July 10 1994) to revoke its decision to assess the Burrup Peninsula Land Use and Management Plan.

This currently means a plan proposing industrial development for the most significant remnant example of the Fortescue Botanical province, the waters around Conzinc Island (recently proposed as a Marine Park in the same document that saved Ningaloo), will now be presented to Cabinet for approval. As a result the proposal will not be able to be assessed by the body charged with monitoring the environment in this state, the Environmental Protection Authority.

The area also covers the worlds most significant petroglyph galleries. The International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO) state that "the Burrup Peninsula contains the largest concentration of petroglyphs (rock carvings) in the world and note that third world countries are doing a better job than Western Australia in managing this type of world heritage.

The Burrup Peninsula Draft Land Use Management Plan does not provide for proper environmental processes for assessing this proposed land use as it clearly implies there will be a rail/road/transport corridor the length of the Burrup and there will be industrial/multiple land use.

If this decision is allowed to go unchallenged then the Environmental Protection Authority and its dept the Department of Environmental Protection, might as well permanently hang up the out to lunch sign.

Mr Chapple said he had sought every avenue to resolve this issue, but was left with no option but to instigate legal action.

Robin Chapple
2 September 1994