

# Rock art furore fires up

By Nicole Heinrich

ROCK art campaigners have criticised a WA Government plan to conserve just 60 per cent of the Burrup Peninsula.

The plan will leave 40 per cent of the land unprotected with potential for further industrial development on the site.

The Burrup is home to Karratha Gas Plant, Burrup Fertilisers' plant, a supply base and a port, with a Woodside-planned gas processing plant in development.

Environment Minister Mark McGowan unveiled a plan for the government and an Aboriginal Body Corporate to jointly manage the Burrup last week.

He said the plan aimed to protect the rock art.

WA National Trust chief executive Tom Perrigo is unopposed to further development on the Burrup but wants to protect rock art that could be destroyed in the process.

He said he was concerned about the timing of the release of the draft plan and its content and demanded to see a business plan the government had based the draft on.

"The document reflects an ad-hoc approach to the whole peninsula," he told the *Pilbara News*.

Trust officials led a forum on the rock art precinct in Karratha last week and Mr Perrigo said there was strong agreement on protecting the rock art.

"No more rock art needs to be destroyed. That came out loud and clear," he said.

"The local community,

indigenous people and the trust weren't consulted about the plan. People were saying that there's something not right here.

"They expressed some very strong reservations about the direction of the plan."

The increased attention on the Burrup comes ahead of Federal Environment and Heritage Minister Ian Campbell's decision on the site's nomination for the National Heritage Register.

Senator Campbell expects to announce his decision for the 20 kilometre-long, five kilometre-wide expanse in September.

Greens senator Rachel Siewert said she planned to work hard to protect the area.

"I'm committed to working in both WA and Canberra to get protection for this unique area," she said.

"We have a global responsibility to protect it."

Ms Siewert said the Burrup had national and international significance.

"It was amazing being out there and seeing art that was done thousands and thousands of years ago," she said.

"It is outrageous that this art is still being destroyed - we saw ourselves where this has just happened."

WA Heritage Council officials also visited the region last week to learn more about the Burrup while Greens leader Bob Brown said he witnessed bulldozers demolish sites during his visit last week.

He said federal intervention to protect the rock art collec-

tion was critical.

"The Burrup is of global fame and importance as human heritage," he said.

"There are excellent nearby industrial sites but there is no replacing these stunning artworks once they are bulldozed.

"The Howard Government will be fostering the nation's best interests if it saves the Burrup Peninsula sites and ensures that industry expands at the alternative venues."

Mr McGowan said the plan would provide local indigenous people with 'ongoing, sustainable employment and business development opportunities'.

A visitor centre, tourist accommodation and recreation sites are proposed for development as part of the plan.

Mr McGowan said the plan also included strategies to conserve native wildlife, provide public recreational facilities and improve access.

"The plan recommends a range of strategies to help conserve the area's natural values."

The government has released the plan for two months to generate public comment.

It is available online or people can view a copy at Karratha, Dampier, Roebourne and Wickham libraries.

Copies are also available from Karratha's office of the Department of Environment and Conservation. Submissions close on September 15.