

Campaign to Save Indigenous Rock Art

Arts Hub Australia
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A campaign has been launched to save the Woodstock-Abydos Reserves in the Pilbara region – one of the oldest and richest rock engraving sites in the world – from further development on behalf of the mining industry.

WA's Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Sheila McHale, recently set a dangerous precedent, her critics argue, by weakening the region's protected status so as to allow the building of a railway line for the Fortescue Metals Group.

Another mining company, BHP, is also seeking to build more infrastructure in the sacred heritage area.

McHale's decision was made in the face of opposition from the Palyku people, one of the two Native Title Claimants for the area (whose large granite hills contain tens of thousands of engravings).

Their formal submission read: "Under no circumstances do Palyku people support the lifting or part lifting of the Protected Area status ... (T)he proposed minimisation of impact on Aboriginal sites contained in the area ... still constitutes a desecration of significant cultural and material heritage and is unacceptable to the Palyku people."

"Palyku people urge the ACMC to inform the Minister of the dangerous precedent that will be set if Protected Area status is lifted from the Reserves."

More poetic was this observation from David Milroy, a Palyku Native Title Working Party member. "In years to come, as the canyons of mining fill with water and the railways rust into the Earth, Stonehenge, the pyramids, the Amazon rainforest, and other ancient places on the earth will weep for the memory of the Pilbara rock art and the people who tried to save it."

"And wherever we are, in this life or the next, we will weep with them."

The campaigners have asked people to write to or email the WA Premier asking for his Minister's decision be rescinded:

The Hon. Alan Carpenter MLA, Premier of Western Australia
197 St George's Terrace, PERTH WA 6000
Email: wa-government@dpc.wa.gov.au

For more information on the campaign, email
palyku.rockart@yahoo.com.au