

Gas plant to disturb rock art

West Australian Resources Minister John Bowler has backed away from his claim that Woodside's \$5 billion Pluto gas plant will not disturb the world's oldest rock art on the Burrup Peninsula, conceding that some of the engravings will be moved to make way for the development.

Mr Bowler said he believed that the rich Aboriginal art — some of which is believed to be 30,000 years old — and large-scale industry could co-exist on the Burrup.

However, it is believed that Woodside will need to destroy or relocate hundreds of the rocks to build the liquefied natural gas plant. The company has admitted that 10 per cent of the engravings on its planned development site will be "disturbed".

Archaeologists and heritage activists claim that emissions from Pluto and other industrial developments will also damage or destroy the art — a claim disputed by Woodside and the state government.

The debate over Woodside's plans highlights the attempts by governments to find a balance between fostering the booming resources industry while protecting Aboriginal heritage and the environment.

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