

Federal Libs failing rock art, industry: Barnett

RHIANNA KING
CANBERRA

Liberal MP Colin Barnett launched a stinging attack on his Federal party colleagues yesterday, saying they had contributed nothing to WA's industrial development and were guilty of failing to protect the ancient Aboriginal rock art in the North-West.

Mr Barnett, who was resources development minister in Richard Court's government and later became Opposition leader, said Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell was neglecting his portfolio through his failure to heritage-list the Burrup Peninsula, where the rock art lies.

He said both the State and Federal governments had handled the situation badly and that the Commonwealth "could not point to a successful industrial project in WA that it has played a significant role in".

Mr Barnett was speaking after Mr Campbell delayed his decision on whether to grant heritage status to the Burrup.

The Australian Heritage Council recommended yesterday that

874sqkm of the North-West, including 100sqkm of the Burrup, be put on the national heritage list.

The State Government has warned that any move to heritage list the Burrup would have a devastating impact on North-West industry and Senator Campbell said yesterday he would not allow the region's development to suffer.

While preserving the rock art was a priority, he admitted some of it would have to be demolished to make way for Woodside's \$5 billion Pluto gas project, which is at the centre of the debate.

He was confident his final decision would satisfy the indigenous community and the region's major gas and oil companies.

"I want what I call a win, win, win: a win for the economy, a win for the environment in terms greenhouse gas reductions, but also putting in place a long-term management plan for the very, very important and ancient rock art at the Burrup," he said.

"But the main reason I'm delaying the decision-making process is that I

want to ensure that the economic development of the Burrup is in no way impeded by the heritage process or the heritage listing."

But Mr Barnett, who is widely known for his economic credentials, said his Liberal colleague was acting more like an economic development minister.

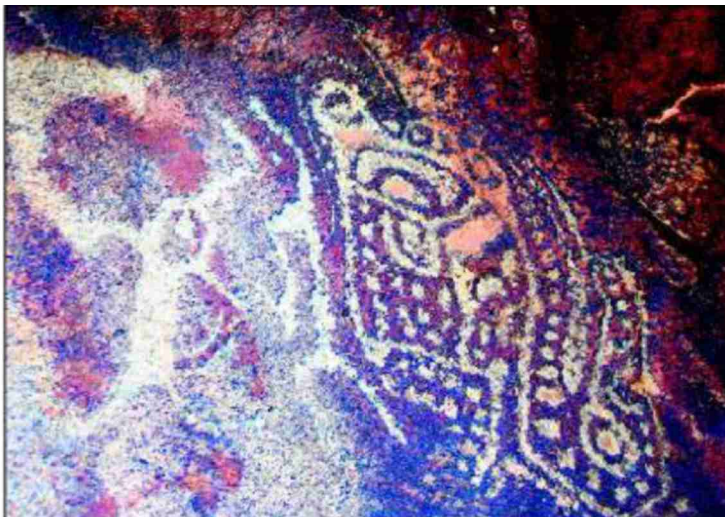
"He's getting his roles confused," Mr Barnett said. "His role is to look after heritage and I cannot find any credible way he could not list this site."

"This delay just creates unnecessary uncertainty and what's important is that the rock art is recognised for its heritage value."

Mr Barnett urged the State Government to pressure Woodside to shift its Pluto project off the Burrup.

A Woodside spokesman welcomed the two-month delay because it would give industry the chance to fight the proposal.

The WA Heritage Council is considering putting the Burrup on its heritage list.



Figures and figures: Burrup art in the clash between development and heritage.