

Ancient art to make way for gas plant

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SOME ancient Aboriginal rock art will be lost on Western Australia's Burrup Peninsula because of the expansion of energy giant Woodside's LNG gas operation, Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell has said.

Hundreds of thousands of petroglyphs, or rock carvings, dating back to the last Ice Age, are estimated to be at the site in WA's north.

But Woodside wants to place a large onshore facility on the peninsula - the former Dampier Island - to support its production.

Interested groups have been waiting on Senator Campbell to make a decision on whether some of the petroglyphs can be sacrificed to make way for the facility.

He has spoken about Burrup today while releasing details of a planned overhaul of Australia's main environment protection act.

"There will be, by the expansion of Woodside's operation, some disturbance to some rock art," he has said.

"But the great majority of it will be undisturbed and I want to make sure the great majority of it has a world-class, long-term, 30- to 40-year management plan in place that protects it, better than it ever protected it before."

Senator Campbell has said that, in considering whether to allow the development to proceed, he has to consider the positive impact of LNG on global warming issues.

"If you put unnecessary impediments in the way of LNG development in the Burrup, you are unnecessarily delaying the world's response to climate change," he has said.

"That gas, when it's put into California or Korea or China or Japan, when it supplants oil or coal-burning for generation of power, reduces greenhouse gases by 40-60 per cent.

"It is a powerful, transformational part of the globe's greenhouse gas response. It's one of the important reasons why the Burrup development must go ahead."

Greens leader Bob Brown has said this claim is fatuous.

"(Under the planned new environment laws), the Burrup, which ought to be protected in its entirety, will be a first casualty of this process.

"The Burrup ought to be nominated for world heritage."