

Explosive plant faces showdown at Burrup

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WA's environmental lobby has vowed to block plans by Burrup Holdings to build a \$600 million explosives plant next to its existing fertiliser operation on the Burrup Peninsula, site of the heritage-listed Aboriginal rock art.

Robin Chapple, a former Greens MLC who is a co-convenor of Friends of Australian Rock Art, said yesterday he would be writing to the State and Federal governments expressing his concern at Burrup Holdings' proposal to build the ammonium nitrate plant alongside its existing ammonia operation. The ammonium nitrate will be sold to Pilbara mining companies to meet their need for explosives.

Mr Chapple said Burrup Holdings' proposed explosives plant, close to Hearson Cove and near much of the peninsula's prized rock art, would exacerbate pollution in the area and cause potentially devastating damage to the petroglyphs, which contain Aboriginal carvings estimated to be up to 30,000 years old.

"Obviously, we will be extremely concerned about the extra emissions," he said.

"And certainly, putting an explosives plant in the area ... any explosion however minor would dislodge much of the rock art."

Mr Chapple said he and his group would oppose Burrup Holdings' environmental clearance application.

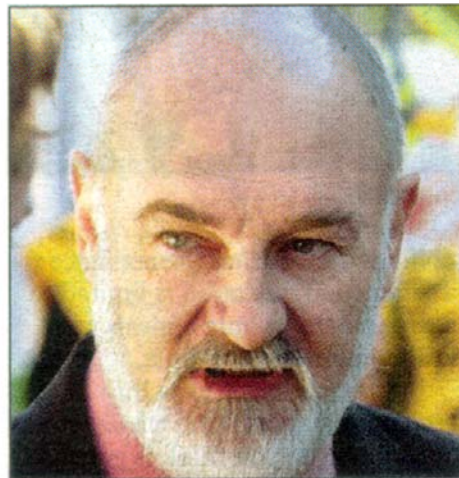
Announcing plans for the ammonium nitrate plant on Monday, Burrup Holdings executive chairman Pankaj

Oswal said he was confident of obtaining all the necessary approvals. He is targeting first ammonium nitrate production by 2011.

But increased sensitivities surrounding the Burrup Peninsula and its rock art could disrupt Mr Oswal's plan and affect Burrup Holdings' proposed \$2.6 billion sharemarket float.

Although the pending float — investor presentations are due to start this month with an expecting listing date towards the end of next month — will not be conditional on the ammonium nitrate plant going ahead, the environmental issues surrounding the proposal are likely to become a talking point among potential investors.

Woodside Petroleum received all approvals for its \$12 billion Pluto liquefied natural gas project on the Burrup last year amid expectations its project would be the last one of scale to be allowed on the peninsula.



Robin Chapple