

25 OCT 2012

Petition No 169 – Burrup Peninsula and Islands of the Dampier Archipelago

Friends of Australian Rock Art (FARA) is a voluntary organization formed in 2006 to seek the protection, preservation and promotion of the unique rock art on the Dampier Archipelago, particularly the Burrup peninsula just out of Karratha.

This area represents the oldest and largest rock art gallery in the world, estimated at approximately 30,000 years old – far older than Stonehenge, the Pyramids and the Lascaux Caves in France.

The million+ petroglyphs are particularly unique in that they represent a continuous chronology of mankind's development, from pre to post the last Ice Age – including the oldest depiction of the human face on the planet!

This amazing rock art precinct has attracted international attention, particularly from esteemed archaeologists like Lorblanchet, Vinnicombe, etc

However, in the 1960s the WA government, attracted by its natural deepwater harbour within easy reach of the recent iron ore enterprises, determined to create an unsurpassed industrial precinct on the site.

Rio Tinto, Dampier Salt and the N-W Shelf Joint Ventures were the first companies encouraged to go there, followed by Woodside's Pluto LNG plant, Burrup Fertilisers and the more recent Burrup Nitrates (Yara Pilbara).

Each company has sought and received EPA approval for its construction, submitting an estimate of its air pollution – but at no time has the EPA taken the total airshed into account.

FARA, with expert scientific advice, has found the air monitoring system in place to be highly deficient and incapable of measuring the total damage done to the fragile patina of the rock art by toxic emissions. So for a company's lifespan of 25 years a fair proportion of mankind's evolutionary chronology can be wiped clean without a trace – what a travesty just for the sake of a quick profit!

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FARA feels that it is high time the WA government ceased encouraging industry onto this extremely vulnerable site – one which the World Monuments Fund has three times included on its list of the World's 100 Most Endangered Sites - and the Australian Heritage Council, at the request of the Federal government, has recently found worthy of World Heritage listing on a number of counts.

Therefore, Friends of Australian Rock Art respectfully requests that the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs urges the WA Government to cease further industrialisation of the Burrup Peninsula and Dampier Archipelago – and that it asks the Federal Government to nominate it for World Heritage listing, a status long overdue in the eyes of the world, and which it so richly deserves.

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