



# THE BURRUP PENINSULA



February 2013

## The world's finest rock art site is still under threat from industrial development.

The Burrup Peninsula adjoins the Dampier Archipelago, a unique series of islands with distinctive ecological and archaeological characteristics that lie just off the Pilbara coast in Western Australia.

The Burrup contains the world's largest and most important collection of petroglyphs: ancient rock art engravings that present a chronology dating back as far as 30,000 years ago. Millions of carvings cover the otherworldly rock piles that litter the Peninsula and surrounding islands.

The area is long overdue for World Heritage listing, as confirmed by the 2012 Survey of the Australian Heritage Commission. But another fate is looming for the Burrup. Although the Western Australian Government has finally launched the Murujuga National Park, to be managed by the Aboriginal leaseholders and the Department of Environment and Conservation, this only covers 44% of the Burrup Peninsula.

**56% is still zoned for current and proposed industrial development, with all its associated problems.**

It is time for the community - local, national and international - to call for a halt to the destruction of the unique heritage of the Burrup Peninsula and insist that industry is developed in a more appropriate location.

*The world condemned the Taliban for destroying the 14th Century Buddhist statues in Afghanistan.*

*We cannot stand by and watch the insidious encroachment of industry on the ancient rock art of the Burrup.*

*This unique cultural heritage must be preserved.*

### What's at stake

- More than a million Aboriginal rock art engravings dating back as far as 30,000 years
- An ecosystem unique in species distribution and largely spared from weeds and feral animals

### What are the threats

- New explosives and chemical plants, infrastructure corridors, port expansions, water desalination plants, quarry expansions, Woodside and North West Shelf Joint Venture LNG facility expansions.
- Escalating vandalism and theft of rock-art.
- Uncontrolled access to all areas, especially the pristine section of the north Burrup and outer islands.

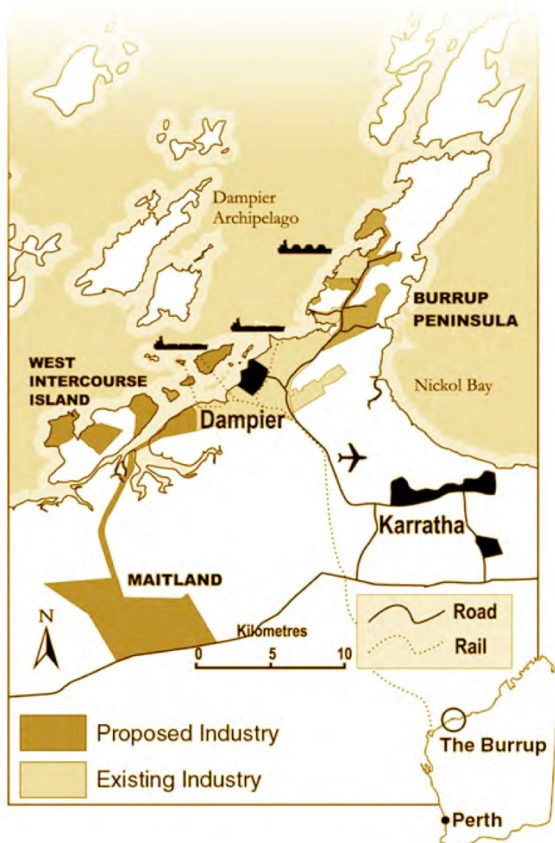
The government has admitted that rock art may be destroyed, damaged or relocated if more industrial development is permitted on the Burrup. Of real concern is the fact that ongoing emissions of sulphur and nitrogen will form acidic compounds that will gradually erode and erase the rock art.

In 2007, thanks to lobbying from Friends of Australian Rock Art, the Federal Government placed the Dampier Archipelago on the National Heritage List.

But our ultimate goal for protection of this unique rock art precinct, three times listed on the World Monument Fund's 100 most endangered sites, is **World Heritage listing**.



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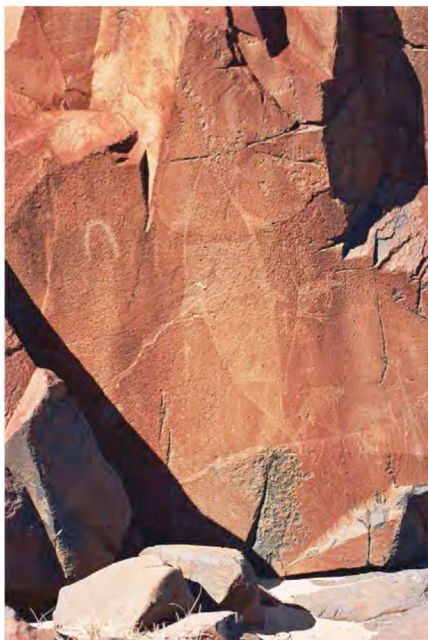


## Polluting Emissions

Collectively, current and proposed heavy industry in and around the Burrup could be responsible for emitting a staggering 18 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year. This is unacceptable given the impact that fossil fuels are already having on the earth's climate. Further damage to the rock art will be done by increasing emissions of sulphur and nitrogen by proposed chemical industries.

## Vandalism and Theft

The advent of thousands more workers associated with heavy industry in the area has already led to spiraling vandalism and theft of rock art. The panel at the bottom left of this page has now been defaced using industrial implements, whilst graffiti, as below, is commonplace.



## What should happen?

- The Government must use alternative sites (eg. the nearby Maitland heavy industry estate and Port Hedland's Boodarie estate) instead of the Burrup for those industries that can demonstrate they will not produce an increase in the State's net greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Burrup must be nominated for World Heritage listing, and be jointly managed by the Indigenous people of the area, rock art conservators and the Department of Environment and Conservation.

## What to do?

Write to Hon Greg Hunt, Minister for the Environment, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600. Let him know you care about the Burrup. Write/visit your local parliamentary member to alert them to the critical situation on the Burrup.

Find out more: contact Friends of Australian Rock Art (FARA) at [www.fara.com.au](http://www.fara.com.au) or [fara.perth@gmail.com](mailto:fara.perth@gmail.com)

Help out however you can. Let FARA know what your skills and interests are. With the future of the Burrup in the balance, there's plenty to do.

Get into the media. Write a letter to the editor or ring talkback radio.

Take responsibility. The Burrup is part of the common heritage of us all. Take action now before the place is lost forever.

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