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Friends of
Australian
Rock Art

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WA Government blacklisted as heritage vandals – again!

The New York based World Monuments Fund has re-listed the ancient rock art on the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia as one of the world's most endangered cultural heritage sites for 2008.

This is the third time the Burrup has been listed in the WMF's biennial index. In 2004 it was the first Australian site in history to make the list and was listed again in the 2006 Watch List.

The fund published its 2008 Watch List on June 6. Other sites listed include: Haji Piyada Mosque (Afghanistan), Amrit Archaeological site (Syria) and the West Bank archaeological area, Luxor, Egypt – home to the famous Valley of the Kings.

Despite a highly publicised visit to the Burrup by WMF President, Bonnie Burnham in 2004, both State and Federal governments have shown no leadership in protecting the Burrup site.

Under former Heritage Minister, Ian Campbell's watch: "*Burrup emergency heritage listing declined*" 22 Dec 2006¹. This despite heavy lobbying from local and international members of the public and parliament, here and overseas.

In a recent tit-for-tat over management of an already World Heritage listed site, Macquarie Island, Tasmania; current Federal Environment & Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull stated on his web site² that "Labour remains guilty of serious neglect of our World Heritage values" and that "the Tasmanian Government is "ignoring its responsibility" and has its priorities all wrong".

"Strong words from a government that has already backed down on numerous opportunities to Heritage List the highly important and significant cultural heritage of the Burrup Peninsula over the past decade," says FARA spokesperson Robin Chapple.

¹ <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2006/mr22dec06.html>

² <http://www.malcolmturbull.com.au/news/article.aspx?ID=718>



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At a state level, the WA government may be starting to concede ground on their grandiose vision to industrialise the Burrup.

WA's Heritage & Indigenous Affairs Minister, Hon Michelle Roberts revealed in parliamentary question time on Tuesday 29th May, 2007 that of nine companies involved in discussing development proposals on the Burrup with State Government in 2003, all except Woodside have now withdrawn from such discussions.³

"Whilst the state and federal governments take ownership of the resource boom, cultural heritage sites such as the Burrup pay the ultimate price. This is a sad indictment on the level of fairness in Australia. Let's not destroy with an excavator in minutes what has taken thousands of years to create and can be appreciated by people for hundreds of years to come," said Mr Chapple.

Whilst FARA welcomed Environment & Water Resources Minister Turnbull's announcement to heritage-list the Burrup later this year; the heritage area is continuing to incur extensive damage as Woodside proceeds with the Pluto LNG project on the Burrup.



At the time of her visit in 2004, President Burnham had said that the Burrup was 'the only monument of such magnitude that has to share its location with an industrial estate'.

FARA has proposed that Woodside relocate its plant off the Burrup and has repeatedly called on the West Australian government to help facilitate such a move.

FARA demands that the State Government respect the wishes of local Aboriginal custodians by stopping any further industrial development on the Burrup.

"There are alternative sites. It needs courage to recognise a past mistake and make a commitment to preserve what remains for future generations," Mr Chapple concluded.

Further resources:

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More information:

- Burrup art and the campaign, visit standupfortheburrup.com
- World Monuments Fund Watch List, visit <http://wmf.org/watch.html>

³ WA Legislative Council question time Tuesday evening 29 May 2007