



**fara**

Friends of  
Australian  
Rock Art

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For immediate release

## **Rock up for Rock Art**

Swan Basement @ the Swan Hotel  
Saturday 25 August 2007  
201 Victoria Street, North Fremantle  
Doors open 7pm \$12/7

**An event to help defend precious Australian cultural heritage under threat**

**A big night of music for one of the wonders of the world**

**Rock up to raise awareness of the Burrup Peninsula, Australia's largest cultural monument**

### THE STORY:

Western Australia's Burrup Peninsula (near Karratha in the Pilbara) is the world's largest outdoor rock engraving site, containing rock art of world importance possibly dating back to 30,000 years ago. Its many treasures include what may be the earliest surviving representation of the human face. With many hundreds of thousands of petroglyphs representing a social and ecological timeline created over the millennia, the richness of the site is extraordinary. Woodside Petroleum and the Western Australian Government are planning to turn part of this site into a natural gas production facility in the face of international alarm and against the wishes of some of the site's Aboriginal custodians.

### **IT'S NOT TOO LATE.**

A significant percentage of the Burrup Peninsula has already been affected by industrial development, with fears for the impact of airborne pollutants. What remains must be protected. There is no excuse for further destruction. 'Relocation' of artworks is vandalism.

**For the latest on what's happening on the Burrup, Robin Chapple, Convenor of Friends of Australian Rock Art, is available for interview: 0409 379 263**

[www.standupfortheburrup.com](http://www.standupfortheburrup.com)

**Defending Australia's Ancient Cultural Heritage**  
[www.standupfortheburrup.com](http://www.standupfortheburrup.com)



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## THE BANDS:

**St Agnes** brings together musicians from south west Noongar, mid west Yamatji (YAM-a-jee) and north west Yaru peoples. The band includes siblings from the renowned Pigram musical clan from Broome and is named after Grandmother Agnes, the late Pigram matriarch. This strong connection to family and country is intertwined in their rootsy music and lyrics.

**Phil Moncrieff** is a Yamatji singer-songwriter from the Ningaloo Coast whose music draws on his Indigenous beliefs and gospel spirituality. His songs carry positive messages of his life experiences and his place in Yamatji society.

**The Hip Replacements** are a good time rock'n'roots band featuring David Milroy, acclaimed songwriter and playwright. The band first played together 30 years ago under the name, Spinifex, and they are back with a taste for Chicago blues and the classic songs of Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson and Howlin' Wolf.

[www.thehips.net](http://www.thehips.net)

**Burgers of Beef** (Blainie Burger bass, Dee Burger drums, Chad Burger guitar, Pete Burger trombone and synth) is Perth's own thrash cabaret band.

[www.burgersofbeef.com](http://www.burgersofbeef.com)

**ENDS**

## **Contacts**

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[www.standupfortheburrup.com](http://www.standupfortheburrup.com)



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## Frequently Asked Questions

### 01. Where exactly is the Burrup Peninsula?

The Burrup Peninsula is 1600 Kilometres from Perth, in the Pilbara district of the North West of Western Australia and near the town ship of Karratha.

### 02. What is the Burrup Peninsula?

The Burrup Peninsula was formerly one of the 47 islands that made up the Dampier Archipelago and was called Dampier Island before being joined to the mainland by a causeway in the early 1960's. At 117 square kilometres it is the largest of the islands of the archipelago.

### 03. Why is it so important to World Heritage?

It is considered by Anthropologists and Archaeologists to possibly contain the largest collection of Petroglyphs (rock carvings) in the world, estimated numbers range from 500,000 to one million individual motifs. It is also unique because it contains many styles of artwork and representations laid down over period from recent times to approximately 30,000 years ago, providing a social and ecological timeline spanning through the last ice age some 17,000 years ago.

### 04. How can one reach it?

The area can be reached by plane from Perth the capital of Western Australia or by travelling north 1600 kilometres on the Great Northern Highway.

### 05. Are the public allowed to explore it?

Yes, there is unfortunately unfettered access to the area. Whilst we support public access it needs to be managed in the same manner as other wonders of the world. Uncontrolled access had led to theft and vandalism.

### 06. Are there any Aboriginal guides to help explain it?

Sadly no formal arrangements exist for the local Aboriginal custodians to guide you through their country.

### 07. Why do companies build on the Burrup when it is a World Monument?

The West Australian (WA) Government has slowly established the Burrup as its northern industrial hub since the mid 1970's and encourages industry to establish there. The government has invested many hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure to attract industry to the Burrup. Not all companies wish to build on the Burrup, recently BHP Billiton Petroleum and Apache Energy have both moved to other more suitable locations nearby, sighting concern over the heritage values of the Burrup as one of the main factors in their choice to relocate.



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**08. Why is Woodside so keen to disturb the area when other companies have chosen to locate elsewhere?**

We have no understanding. We are also concerned that Woodside has chosen to develop on virgin land containing many petroglyphs when land that has already been desecrated and cleared of rock art remains unused.

**09. What pressure does it require to get the government to legislate in favour of protection?**

Continued pressure, by letter writing and representation to the Premier of Western Australia, the relevant Ministers and your local political member. (see list)

**10. What is the percentage of the Burrup Peninsula that has been cleared so far?**

It is calculated that 10-13% of the Burrup has been directly affected by the industry footprint so far, this must be considered as being much larger when taking into account the visual and structural relationship of much of the rock art.

**11. What is the percentage of the Burrup Peninsula that is being preserved for conservation?**

The WA Government has stated that it wishes to conserve only 62% of the Burrup, this is incorrect for two reasons. Firstly the area identified for conservation is only 43% of the Burrup land mass and secondly the WA Government now intends to open this area, parts of which are protected areas under state and federal jurisdiction, for increased tourism activity. This is to be done by driving a tarmac road into areas that are currently difficult to access (thereby protected) and by developing accommodation nodules in these newly opened areas. This in essence will open up more areas to vandalism and theft.

**12. Are any other island in the Dampier Archipelago under threat?**

The WA government has stated that after it has filled up the Burrup with industry it intends to develop 53% of West Intercourse Island for industry. West Intercourse Island is 19 square kilometres in size and has an incredible density of rock art and shell middens (piles of discarded shells from food gathering).

**13. What are the Archaic faces?**

These are considered to be possibly some of the oldest carvings and art in Australia and are a unique form of representation of faces being highly articulate. These often present as a negative relief similar to that of a Lino print. They possibly represent an insight into what may have been a highly mobile society in the early colonization of Australia. These faces are found both in the Dampier Archipelago and 1500 km inland at sites such as Cleland Hills in the Northern Territory 320 km West of Alice Springs.

**14. Are there any caves on the Burrup Peninsula?**

Not as one would understand a cave, there are however a number of natural rock shelters



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formed by fallen slabs of granite. The Archipelago also contains man made pits, sometimes referred to as hunting hides

#### **15. What is the environmental impact on the Burrup Peninsula?**

The Burrup is possibly the largest single point source of CO2 emissions in WA running at around 10 million tonnes per annum. With this comes the attendant release of ammonia, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitric acid, benzene, toluene and ethyl benzene, p-xylene, m-xylene and o-xylene plus a high level of suspended solids. The Government has indicated that whilst these levels are considerably higher than natural background levels they are no higher than those experienced by large cities. They conclude that they don't know if these emissions will impact the rock art. We know that even in Perth heritage material such as Rodin's famous sculpture of Adam had to be removed from outside the Art Gallery of WA because of a deadly bronze disease it developed from being exposed to airborne pollutants.

#### **16. What processes are in place to protect the rock art?**

The rock art falls under a protection regime of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972-1980 (AHA) administered by the Department of Indigenous Affairs. The AHA processes allow for application to be made to the Minister to destroy or relocate sites (called a section 18). Advice to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs on any application is made by the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee. The Minister is not obliged to take account of their advice. It is known from Parliamentary questions that the Ministers of the current government have never declined consent for industry to destroy or relocate these items. The Burrup contains two protected areas under the AHA, these are AHA56 "climbing man" and AHA43 "North Burrup". AHA43 is proposed to have semi-permanent tented accommodation or cabins established in it. The Burrup also contained three areas on the former National Estate Register (NER) of places. NER 10087 is in part proposed for the industrial development area on the southern Burrup next to West Intercourse Island and 10096 is the same as AHA43 proposed to have semi-permanent tented accommodation or cabins established in it. It is therefore clear that protected area status or NER seems to have no function on the Burrup.

#### **17. Isn't it too late to protect the Burrup Peninsula?**

No, whilst over ten thousand petroglyphs have been destroyed and many thousand relocated, one has to acknowledge that this seems to have been done in ignorance of the cultural, scientific and heritage value of the Dampier Archipelago and Burrup. The Burrup land area impacted directly by industry is around 10%, a further 33% is identified for industrial development under the Roebourne Town Plan No 8 of 2002 and further areas for development, roads and low impact accommodation are proposed for areas outside of this Town Plan area. The Burrup's impacted areas should be retained at the current level of destruction and proposed developments moved elsewhere. In the words of Colin Barnett MLA the former Minister for State Development, "However, today with our level of knowledge, enlightenment and sophistication, the challenge we face is to reconcile them where those conflicts exist (On the Burrup). We certainly cannot use ignorance today as an excuse".