



Media Alert

November 18, 2007
For immediate release

FRIENDS OF AUSTRALIAN ROCK ART PRESS RELEASE

Attention: All news and business journalists and editors, COS

Burrup rock art campaigners target Liberal's Malcolm Turnbull in Sydney, Labor's Gary Gray in Perth and Woodside's Pluto B lease on the Burrup Peninsula.

Aboriginal rock art campaigners entered the federal election campaign on Saturday 17 November with protests outside Liberal and ALP candidates' offices in Sydney and Perth.

Friends of Australian Rock Art, today highlighted the ongoing threats to the world's oldest and largest outdoor rock art gallery on the Burrup Peninsula, 1500 k north of Perth, and the dubious legality of the approval processes which have allowed Woodside to clear rock art to make way for its \$11bn LNG plant.

Protests took place yesterday outside the Sydney office of Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull in his marginal seat of Wentworth, and near the office of ALP candidate Gary Gray, who is contesting Kim Beazley's outer Perth seat of Brand after resigning from a position as Woodside's Director of Corporate Affairs in early 2007.

Friends of Australian Rock Art spokesperson Stephen Bennetts commented after the protest in Brand:

"Gary Gray, by trying to join FARA's protest showed the lowest form of cynicism and hypocrisy. His former employer Woodside is wantonly destroying some of the oldest art in the world. As a Woodside executive lobbying the Federal Government, Gary Gray was an integral part of the machine destroying this world heritage and Aboriginal sacred site."

The "Stand Up for the Burrup" events were held in support of an Aboriginal protest on Saturday afternoon outside Woodside's "Pluto" LNG lease on the Burrup, where Robyne Churnside, a Ngarluma custodian of the Burrup, issued the statement reproduced below.

ENDS

www.standupfortheburrup.com

C/o Conservation Council of W.A Inc. Lotteries House 2 Delhi St. West Perth
6005 Western Australia email: fara.perth@gmail.com ABN: 35 018 895 052



Statement by Robyne Churnside, Aboriginal custodian and owner of the Burrup Peninsula (Murujuga).

Arriving on the Burrup on Saturday, Aboriginal custodians were first barred from entering the Pluto B lease after Woodside lowered a boom gate controlling access to the Pluto B lease via what is believed to be a public, Government-funded road. Aboriginal protestors then walked to the Pluto A lease gate, where Ngarluma custodian Robyne Churnside read the following statement to TV cameras (a copy of the text was hand delivered to Minister Michelle Roberts at the Wardanji Aboriginal Festival in Fremantle three hours later):

Woodside Energy Ltd says it has not destroyed any rock art on the Burrup Peninsula, just 'moved' it. My people say that once a piece of rock art left by our ancestors is removed, our song line, our sacred site, is destroyed forever. Aboriginal people believe that the Burrup is a powerful and dangerous place, and that bad things will happen to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people if it is disturbed.

For nearly forty years, Woodside and other companies have made billions of dollars from our country. But what benefits have we, the Aboriginal custodians of the Burrup, seen from the mining boom? While white mining executives live in luxury in Peppermint Grove in Perth, in 2007, there are still 15 Aboriginal families in Roebourne living in houses made of asbestos!

Our people said we were happy for Woodside to build their gas plant on our country, as long as they didn't damage our rock art and our sacred sites, our library for future generations. We asked them to put the plant nearby, somewhere where our cultural heritage, our stories would be safe. That's what we said to Woodside, the Western Australian Government and Malcolm Turnbull, the Commonwealth Environment Minister. But instead, they were too greedy, and didn't listen to us.

When our old people signed the Burrup and Maitland estates Industrial Agreement (BIMIEA) with the State government in 2003, we thought they would be true to their word. Woodside and the Western Australian Government promised to protect our cultural heritage, but instead they told us a lot of lies.

Woodside has not even followed the WA Aboriginal Heritage Act section 18 conditions set down by Indigenous Affairs Minister Michelle Roberts legalising Woodside's destruction of our rock art.

The WA Aboriginal Heritage Act gives mining companies permission to legally destruction Aboriginal heritage in Western Australia under whitefella law, but doesn't even follow whitefellas' own law. It gives a right of appeal to white developers who ask the Minister for permission to destroy our heritage, but not to the Aboriginal custodian who own that heritage. This is racial discrimination, supposed to be illegal under the whitefellas' own law, the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

WA Environment Minister David Templeman's approval for Woodside's Pluto project under the WA Environmental Protection Act was also illegal.

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Woodside paid archaeologists and anthropologists to come here and destroy our rock art on Pluto A and B leases. None of them got permission from our old people to do this. By doing this, they breached their own professional codes of ethics, as well as the Burra Charter and the UNESCO Statement on the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage.

This year my uncle Wilfred Hicks asked Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull to protect our cultural heritage on Pluto B and move the Pluto plant somewhere else less dangerous. Malcolm Turnbull waited until three days after his own Government was dissolved in October, and then told his junior Minister, Mr John Cobb, to tell Uncle Wilfred that, 'the Pluto B area does not meet the criteria under the Act for an Aboriginal protected area'.

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Woodside and the WA Government think they have the right to do whatever they like with our country here, which they call 'The Burrup' and we call 'Murujuga'.

We say Murujuga is still our country, through our ancestors and our dreaming. We say it is still our right under Aboriginal Law to come here, to hunt, collect bush tucker and bush medicine, light fires, conduct ceremonies, teach our children, and make decisions about this country.

We have come here today to show people around the world that whatever Woodside and the State Government say, we still have the right to enter our land, to exercise our native title rights here and to defend and protect it from the greed and destruction brought upon it by the Western Australian Government and Woodside.

Woodside Pluto B Lease, Dampier Peninsula (Murujuga), Saturday 17 November 2007.

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Further information:

Please see the following documents:

- FARA letter to Malcolm Turnbull last week
http://www.standupfortheburrup.com/doco/FARA_Letter_to_Turnbull_13-11-07.pdf
- FARA letter to Peter Garrett last week
http://www.standupfortheburrup.com/doco/FARA_Letter_to_Garrett_12-11-07.pdf
- Photos of Burrup, Wentworth and Brand 'Stand Up for the Burrup' actions.
<http://www.standupfortheburrup.com/px/BDayStandUpsPx.zip>

Spokespersons for Saturday's Aboriginal protest at Woodside's Pluto lease on the Burrup:

- Robyne Churnside (Ngarluma Aboriginal custodian of the Burrup): Ph 0439 925 717
- Sue Smaldon (archaeologist): 0400 509 096

For legal commentary on the illegal nature of other WA Government Pluto project approvals, breaches of Woodside's s 18 conditions, and breaches of the BMIEA Agreement by the WA State Government, contact:

- Grant Kitto, solicitor, Wong-Ga-Tt-Oo People and Wilfred Hicks: 9322 6644 (w)
gak@iinet.net.au
- Stephen Walker, barrister, Greens candidate for the Federal Seat of Fremantle: 0411 431 091

For legal commentary on the unconstitutional nature of the WA Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972:

- David Ritter, UWA Law School, former Principal Legal Officer, Yamatji Land and Sea Council, WA ALP delegate, National ALP Conference, Darling Harbour, Sydney, 2007 (see also his article 'Trashing Heritage: Dilemmas of Rights and Power in the Operation of WA's Aboriginal Heritage Legislation', available at: <http://www.dampierrockart.net/Studies.html>): dritter@iinet.net.au. Ph 0409 645 647
- FARA 'B-Day' National Day of Action for the Burrup coordinator: Stephen Bennetts: 0404 674 261. Email: bennes06@tartarus.uwa.edu.au

Websites:

- Media coverage of the Burrup issue: www.dampierrockart.net/Media/
- Stand Up for the Burrup website: www.standupfortheburrup.com

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