



1 December 2017

Project Manager
Draft Burrup Rock Art Strategy
Department of Water Environmental Regulation
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FRIENDS OF AUSTRALIAN ROCK ART INC. (WA)

RESPONSE TO WA GOVERNMENT'S DRAFT BURRUP ROCK ART STRATEGY

Friends of Australian Rock Art Inc. (WA) welcomes the attention now being focussed at last on this important issue after years of State Government neglect, and also welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Strategy.

FARA fully endorses issues of concern raised in separate submissions by Professor John Black and UWA's Centre for Rock Art Research and Management and also makes the following comments:

1. the findings of the Senate Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Rock Art of the Burrup Peninsula have again been deferred and are still not available. Although these findings will be critical to informing a credible management plan for the Burrup rock art, the deadline for public comment on the Draft Strategy has not been revised by the Minister to reflect this change. Until the release of the Senate Inquiry report, the following comments can thus only be regarded as preliminary.
2. The proposed makeup of the reference group is strongly weighted towards non-expert government employees and 'stakeholders' and does not suggest that the reference group will have sufficient technical expertise to evaluate the key question at issue here, namely, what is the effect of current and projected industrial emissions on the Burrup rock art?
3. Taking measurements of emissions loads from industry will not in itself achieve any understanding of impacts on rock art: this issue is not adequately addressed in the draft strategy.

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4. To credibly investigate these issues, the Government would need to establish a long-term scientific rock art monitoring program with an independent scientific panel including rock art and conservation specialists, operating to global best-practice UNESCO and ICOMOS standards, funded from an independent trust (by government, land-user, land planning and philanthropic bodies) and addressing the National Heritage Listing values under the EPBC Act and realising the precautionary principles of the EPA Act. This scientific panel must be capable of operating openly, transparently, independently and without improper influence from industry sponsors.
5. Given the demonstrably false scientific advice which it has provided on the effect of industrial emissions on Burrup rock art in the past, the CSIRO should have no further role in such a process.
6. Given the relevant expertise available in UWA's Centre for Rock Art Research and Management and the Centre's recently launched research project on the effect of industrial emissions on the Burrup rock art, the Centre must certainly be represented on the reference group, and as part of the scientific committee.
7. There is enough scientific evidence that current industrial emissions are affecting the Burrup rock art, yet there is no indication in the Draft Strategy as to what action, if any, the State Government intends to take to avoid irreversible damage to the rock art. Under no circumstances should the Draft Strategy be used as a bureaucratic pretext to delay taking concrete action to prevent further damage taking place: the time for action is now.
8. In FARA's view, if the State Government were genuine in its wish to protect the unique cultural values of the Burrup rock art, it would:
 - immediately transfer title for all unoccupied gazetted industrial leases to Murujuga National Park;
 - halt any further expansion of industrial facilities on the Burrup or Dampier Archipelago;
 - review and amend Ministerial Statement no 870 (11 July 2011) relating to conditions for construction and operation of the Technical Ammonium Nitrate production Facility, Burrup Peninsula (Assessment No. 1764)) before a licence to operate the facility is granted;
 - enact the principles of National Heritage, EPBC and EPA legislation to compel existing industry to eliminate harmful emissions, either by adopting best practice technology such as industrial scrubbers, or alternatively, relocating activities away from the Burrup's globally significant rock art, in order to avoid irreversible damage;
 - Immediately nominate the Dampier Archipelago for the UNESCO tentative World Heritage List, to provide appropriate protection for this globally significant cultural site. This objective must be advanced immediately (without further political delay by State and Federal

Governments), in accordance with the wishes of senior Murujuga Aboriginal custodians and WA Premier Mark McGowan's statement of support for World Heritage Listing to ABC journalist David Weber on 6 March 2017 during the recent election campaign: "I support that. I support that, it is a beautiful area and I support World Heritage listing....Now, in my view, it's an important issue, something we'd progress."

- As witnessed by the attached statement signed earlier this year by the following senior members of the four language groups who were parties to the BMIEA agreement, World Heritage Listing is also supported by senior Aboriginal custodians of Murujuga/the Burrup Peninsula. The State Government should therefore respect their wishes by immediately progressing World Heritage Listing.

Thank you for taking these concerns of ours into consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Hugo

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Co-convenor

Friends of Australian Rock Art (FARA)



STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE DAMPIER ARCHIPELAGO (INCLUDING MURUJUGA/THE BURRUP PENINSULA) TO BE NOMINATED TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S TENTATIVE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

As senior Aboriginal custodians of the Dampier Archipelago, which includes Murujuga/the Burrup Peninsula, we are proud of our living and enduring culture, and of our connection to the Dampier Archipelago.

We value for ourselves, for future generations and for humanity in general, the extraordinary record of more than 40,000 years of continuous human habitation of this place, represented in more than one million amazing images throughout the Dampier Archipelago. These petroglyphs constitute the largest, oldest and longest sequence of an outdoor rock art gallery in the world. They are of outstanding universal value to humankind as well as to us as the Aboriginal custodians of Murujuga.


It is important that the Aboriginal cultural heritage of the Dampier Archipelago is given the recognition and international standing that is warranted. We are deeply concerned about current threats to Murujuga's exceptional rock art and believe it could be better protected if the Australian Government were to nominate the Murujuga rock art to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

We therefore request that the State and Federal Governments support the inclusion of the Dampier Archipelago on Australia's Tentative World Heritage List, to make it possible for a genuine period of consultation with us as Aboriginal custodians to take place, so that we can consider in detail what World Heritage Listing would mean for us, and how our community can best manage this incredibly significant area.

The Premier of Western Australia must immediately propose the Dampier Archipelago for inclusion on Australia's Tentative World Heritage List.

We also ask the Federal Environment Minister to include the Dampier Archipelago on Australia's updated Tentative World Heritage List, and to submit the revised tentative List in time for consideration at the World Heritage Committee meeting in July 2017.

We sign this as representatives of the Aboriginal custodians



Signatories:

- Jill Churnside (Ngarluma)
- Violet Samson (Ngarluma)
- Bigali Hanlon (Yindjibarndi)
- Tootsie Daniels (Yindjibarndi)
- Wilfred Hicks (Won-Goo-Tt-Oo)
- Valerie Cosmos (Yaburara/Mardhudhunera)

- Audrey Cosmos (Yaburara/Mardhudhunera)
- Kevin Cosmos (Yaburara/Mardhudhunera)
- Michael Boona (Yaburara/Mardhudhunera)