

ABORIGINAL ROCK ART — BURRUP PENINSULA

Statement

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [5.19 pm]: I wish to talk tonight about a matter that was raised during statements two days ago by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Peter Collier. I have a series of maps that can be distributed to members who wish to see them. There were two components to that debate. One was about the density of rock art and the sites that covered the Burrup Peninsula. Those who look at the maps that are available will see that there is a large percentage of rock art on the eastern flank of the Burrup Peninsula. Being intimately involved with the Burrup over many years, I determined to look at all of those sites. It is really interesting to note that when one looks at the reports on the register, one can see all 205—there are a few more held in private hands—are indeed on the register. Bar about three or four, all refer to the development of industry on the Burrup. All those yellow dots seen on the map on the front page are sites that have been destroyed. The line running down the southern end of the Burrup is associated with the road from Dampier to Hearsons Cove. The dots surrounding West Intercourse Island and the heel of Burrup Peninsula are associated with one of the few surveys that have been done without the need for industrial development. That was concluded as a result of the Burrup and Maitland Industrial Estates Agreement to assess an area for future industrial development.

The second map refers to mythological sites, of which there are a few on the Burrup. The third map identifies the areas that the minister referred to, which are protected areas. Members will note there are five areas. Three of them are on the Australian Heritage Database and two are protected sites under the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

The next map is a map of the area set aside as part of the Burrup and Maitland Industrial Estates Agreement. The green is the area under the control of the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation. The pink areas are all identified for future development. The next map is in black and white. It has a series of sites all over it. Those sites were recorded in 1967. Virtually none of these are on the register. I will talk a bit more about that shortly. The reason for a lot of the early work was that the original proposals on the last map were to put a rail line all the way down the Burrup, over Dolphin Island and out to Legendre Island, and a deepwater port there. The final map shows the industrial development to date. The areas in yellow are set aside for future industrial development.

I will deal with the yellow dots. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs said, “It’s fine; the Burrup is covered.” I think he used 2 200 sites. My reckoning, after looking at the register, is there are about 2 800. But who am I to judge? I turn to the reports where these little yellow dots have been derived from. I will turn to any page; I came up with one in the middle. It says, “The Report of the Aboriginal Site Relocation and Salvage, Nickol Bay Quarry”. Turning to another page, it says “An Archaeological Survey for Department of Resources and Development ... Four areas: a) on the western flank of Burrup Peninsula”. That was for an LNG plant. All of these were done for industry. In most cases, the large number of dots are covered by the MOF—materials offloading facility—wharf and indeed the Woodside North West Shelf venture. We know that at least 4 800 petroglyphs were destroyed in those areas.

In a statement in the *Pilbara News*, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs said —

While the Burrup as a whole was deregistered, the decision does not impact on more than 2400 individually registered sites on the peninsula.

That is correct. However, none of those 2 400 sites actually exists, because they have all been destroyed. The article continues —

WA Indigenous Affairs Minister Peter Collier said on the basis of information provided by the ACMC, the Burrup in its entirety could not, and should not, be considered a site.

I asked a question on notice of the minister on Thursday, 8 March 2012, which reads, in part —

Was the decision of the ACMC in respect of the assessment of Site 23323 Burrup Peninsula, that it met the criteria for a registered site?

The answer was, “Yes”. We need then to go back to what the Aboriginal Sites Department of the Western Australian Museum had to say about the Burrup. A report on the Dampier Archaeological Project from 1984 states —

Another important convention concerns the definition of an archaeological site. For all intents and purposes, the Dampier Archipelago exhibits a density of archaeological material sufficient to warrant its designation as a single site complex.

In 1993 a large survey was carried out over the Burrup Peninsula by a number of archaeologists, associated with some work done by the then Department of Conservation and Land Management. They surveyed the whole

northern end of the Burrup, which, as members will see from their maps, has virtually no record of any material. This report is still with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and none of the sites included in this document is on the register, and yet it was one of the most significant surveys ever done on the Burrup. Site 23323 Burrup Peninsula is intended to represent or protect those sites that currently are not on the register. If members go back to the black and white map I referred to earlier on, they will see that all those sites recorded back in the 1960s do not appear on the register. None of the work done by Enzo Grilli, who has now passed away, or by Michel Lorblanchet in France is on the register.

I now turn to the *Hansard* of the Legislative Assembly, on 9 March 2006. In the debate on the Premier's Statement, Colin Barnett said —

As a former Minister for Resources Development over an eight-year period, I had effective responsibility for the Burrup Peninsula. I remain to this day proud of what happened in that portfolio during that time, but I concede today that although I was aware of the presence of rock art, I did not during that period grasp its significance. I believe I do now.

I had the privilege of taking Colin Barnett and his sons on a fairly extensive tour of the Burrup. Noting my time, I think it would be important for me to read in one salient point, although I am being a bit egotistical here. He said —

I acknowledge in particular Robert Bednarik; the late Patricia Vinnicombe from the Western Australian Museum; and Hon Robin Chapple, a former upper house member of this Parliament. These people stand out because of the enormous amount of time they have spent on this work.

That is, the work on the Burrup. It is really interesting to go on in that speech to note that the Premier, in saying that he believes the sites will one day be on the World Heritage register, said —

Sites in Spain, France and elsewhere have been closed. Sites that used to attract 1 200 visitors a day are, for protection reasons, now no longer open. Western Australia has a site that can be open. The rock art is not in a cave; it is in an open location.

...

I have no doubt that the Burrup Peninsula will ultimately receive National Heritage listing —

Which it did —

and probably World Heritage listing.

A document I assisted with, for Hon Malcolm Turnbull for the National Heritage listing, identifies in appendix 8 four criteria for World Heritage listing of the Burrup. It is noted that there are only six and indeed it is most unusual for anywhere to achieve four criteria. Only one criterion is needed for World Heritage listing.