

9 May 2013

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OUR REF: RIV1278-1

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

WORLD HERITAGE LISTING OF THE DAMPIER ARCHIPELAGO INCLUDING THE BURRUP PENINSULA

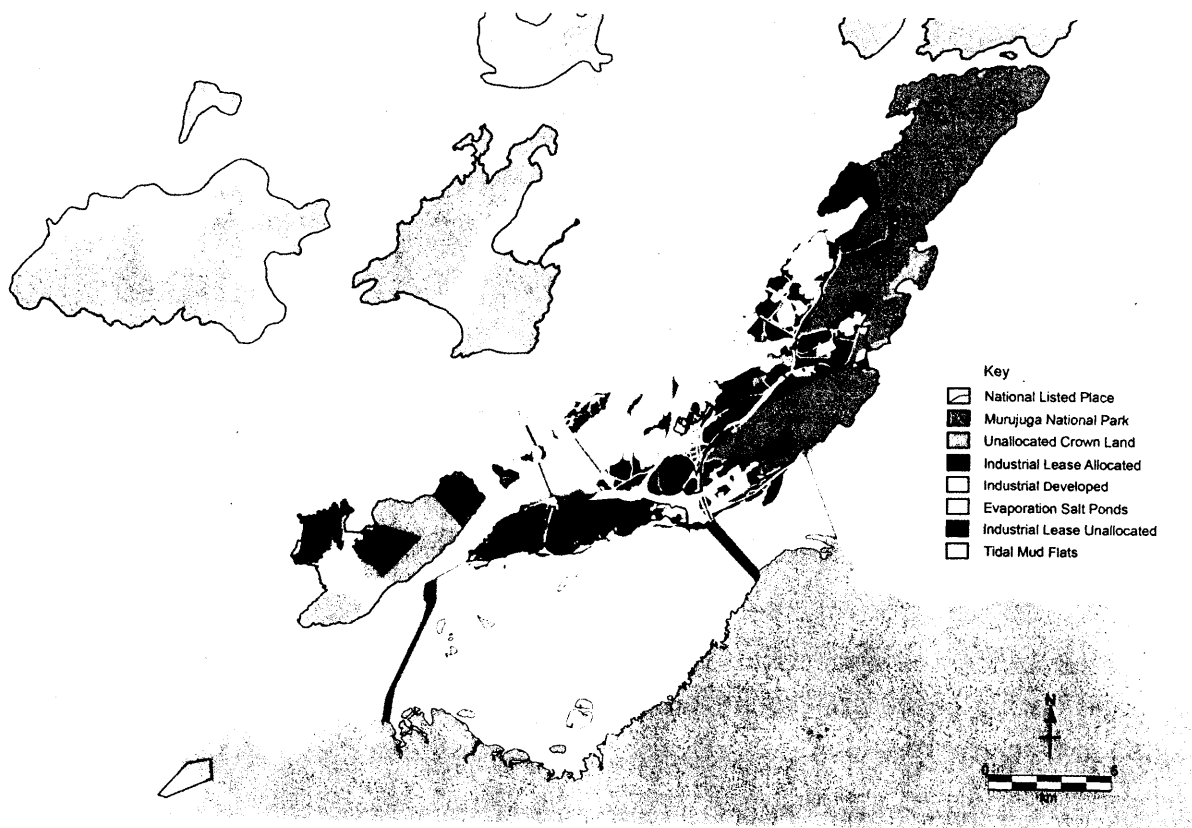
We write to you seeking action by the Commonwealth to bring about the World Heritage Listing of the Aboriginal rock art of the Dampier Archipelago, in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

We are the surviving signatories of the Burrup & Maitland Industrial Estates Agreement Additional Deed, dated 16 January 2003 entered into by the Premier of Western Australia and the three Contracting Parties to the Additional Deed and the Burrup & Maitland Industrial Estates Implementation Deed made on 1 November 2002.

We have long considered that the Dampier Archipelago, including the Burrup Peninsula should be recognised and protected by World Heritage Listing from encroaching industrial development which has seen much destruction of rock art. Many people have been supporting us but as yet the Commonwealth has not taken the necessary step in referring the place to the World Heritage Listing Authority. As each year goes by there is more and more industrial activity on the Burrup which is a continual threat to the survival of what remains.

The Additional Deed was intended to be a vehicle for the comprehensive study of the Burrup for conservation and World Heritage Values but after 10 years that has not happened. Successive State Governments have failed to meet their obligation under the Additional Deed. Yet during the same period, the State Government has signed off on a number of new projects, such as the Woodside Pluto LNG project, and expansion of existing operations and services.

Despite the recent proclamation of the Murujuga National Park to some 42% of the Burrup, the State Government has large sections of the Burrup and adjacent islands zoned for future industrial development (see Map 1). Much of the area zoned for industrial development contains significant sites but has not been subject to any formal survey assessment, a process that should have taken place under the Additional Deed.



Map 1: Part of the Dampier Archipelago including the Burrup showing the current land status and the National Heritage Place

We believe that the Commonwealth must act now on the World Heritage Listing before any more time is lost. We know from our Aboriginal traditions how important the rock art and cultural landscape of the Dampier Archipelago is for our people and all Aboriginal people of the Pilbara whose song lines pass through the Archipelago. We believe the Dampier Archipelago is a place of value to all of humanity and as significant as other places in the world where indigenous and ancient art forms have received World Heritage recognition.

A recent report by the Australian Heritage Council assessed that the Dampier Archipelago is a place of Outstanding Universal Value. That same report touched on the matter of our own connection to the place and the significant cultural traditions which tie us to this land. We can only reiterate that the Dampier Archipelago rock art and other heritage features retain spiritual and ritual meaning to us.

We ask you, therefore, Minister Burke, to urgently act on our pleas to formally nominate the Dampier Archipelago including the Burrup Peninsula to the World Heritage Authority. We need to ensure that this rich and ancient, yet contemporary component of our national heritage is protected and preserved for future generations.

Yours sincerely

W.H. Hicks
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His MARK Tim Douglas.

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