

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — 14TH JULY, 2008

ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST OUTDOOR ROCK ENGRAVING SITES UNDER THREAT

The World Archaeological Congress calls on the Australian Government and Western Australian Government to protect rock art and standing stones threatened by industrial and other development within the Dampier Archipelago and wider Pilbara region of Western Australia.

“The Burrup Peninsula is one of the largest complexes of rock art engravings in the world,” said Professor Claire Smith, President of the World Archaeological Congress. “These engravings need to be protected, not only for Australians but for the world at large.”

“This complex of sites is of global significance. I find it astonishing that the Western Australian and Federal governments are not acting to protect this important body of rock art.”

Woodside Petroleum and the Western Australian Government are planning to turn part of this site into a natural gas production facility against the recommendations of the archaeological community and contravening the desires of some of the site's Aboriginal custodians.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Professor Claire Smith
Mobile: 0872 698 353 (Ireland)
Email: claire.smith@flinders.edu.au

Professor Paul Tacon
Email: p.tacon@griffith.edu.au

BACKGROUND:

The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization and is the only elected international body of practising archaeologists. WAC holds an international congress every four years to promote the exchange of the results of archaeological research; professional training and public education for disadvantaged nations, groups and communities; the empowerment and betterment of Indigenous groups and First Nations peoples; and the conservation of archaeological sites.

The Sixth World Archaeological Congress (WAC-6) was held from 29th June—4th July at the University College Dublin. This was the first World Archaeological Congress to be held in Ireland. It was attended by over 1,800 archaeologists, native peoples and international scholars from 74 nations. Motions from the Plenary session of the Congress were considered by subsequent meetings of the World Archaeological Congress Council and Executive.

The Congress Patron for WAC-6 was President Mary McAleese. Previous Congress Patrons include Harriet Mayor Fulbright, Prince Charles and Nelson Mandela.