



the



EGGLESTON

report

Senator Alan Eggleston: Working for Western Australia

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The Burrup's ancient petroglyphs

The Burrup Peninsula, south of Karratha, is home to thousands of ancient rock carvings and has been described as 'the world's largest art gallery'.

I was first shown these rock carvings by the well-known naturalist Harry Butler in the early 1990s when, after a meeting of the board of the Pilbara Development Commission (which he then chaired), Mr Butler took me to the Burrup.

We drove down a track behind the Woodside gas plant and walked to a rocky area where there were thousands of rock carvings. There are thought to be in excess of 10,000, with more than 500 sites having been recorded. Some authorities believe that certain sites may represent human activity over 27,000 years ago.

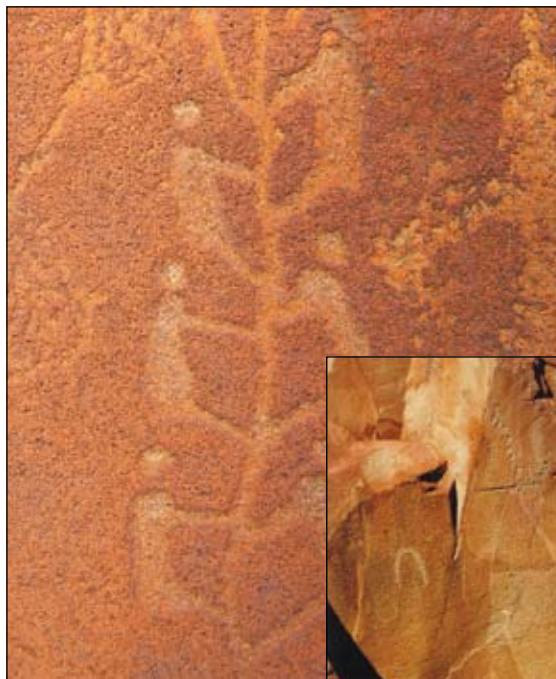
It is considered that Australia was one of the last continents to be inhabited by humans. This is believed to have occurred between 40,000 and 60,000 years ago. It is also thought by many that the Dampier rock art precinct may have been settled very early in Australia's history.

The scenes are considered to be more complex and animated than any other engravings of a similar kind in Australia, and perhaps in the world. There are many styles of engravings, with a number of different methods of application, giving rise to the view that there were different periods of formation.

The National Trust regards the Burrup rock carvings as some of the greatest archaeological resources in the world and is anxious that action is taken to protect the petroglyphs, which coincidentally are found next to the Woodside LNG plant in Dampier. The concern of the National Trust is that effluent from the existing LNG plant and proposed petrochemical developments may endanger the petroglyphs.

I recently co-hosted a seminar in Canberra to discuss

the future of the petroglyphs. It is the case that some have already been destroyed, but the seminar was told due to the huge number of artworks and the lack of investigation into the site, the scale of this damage is unknown. This seminar also provided an opportunity to discuss the increasing industry pressures facing the Burrup.



Examples of the ancient rock art



Pictures: ROBIN CHAPPLE

Obviously a balance is required between recognising the legitimate interests of the companies which have invested in the Dampier area and the desirability of preserving and protecting the petroglyphs, which cover so much of the Burrup Peninsula and adjacent Dampier Archipelago.

From my point of view, it seems that there should be an audit of the petroglyphs so that an evaluation of the number and significance of the artworks can be made.

Once that is done, other decisions regarding the various interests in the area can be made.

The significance of Australian prehistoric archaeology lies in its role in determining the spread of modern humans over the face of the globe. We already know that people had reached Australia using watercraft by around

60,000 years ago—that is, before we have evidence that our own modern type of human, *Homo sapiens*, was established in Europe. The routes to Australia which would have involved the shortest sea crossing lead to our north-west shores.

It seems that the Pilbara coast must have been one of the earliest entry points of ancient humans to Australia.

Indigenous textiles on show



Top quality designs were on show at the Indigenous Textile and Fashion Parade — part of the Belmont Small Business Awards held recently.

The fashion parade provided an opportunity to display some outstanding work from WA and the NT, including designs from Kaninda Designs (Wickham), Marra Indigenous Textile Art (Geraldton), Karda Designs (Pinjarra), Husssy (Broome), Paperbark Woman (Darwin) and Earth Dreaming (Alice Springs).

That these enterprises are producing such impressive, high quality works suggests a healthy future for the Aboriginal textile industry in Australia.

I was pleased to represent the Federal Government at the business awards, which showcase some of the outstanding initiatives of local operations across a wide range of fields

including marketing, customer service and tourism.

Small business is the backbone of the Australian economy, accounting for 95 per cent of all business and employing 3.3 million Australians. Small business is also a vital source of exports and innovation for Australia. Recognising the importance of this sector, the Howard Government has implanted a legislative program to help small business operators.

Exempting small businesses from the unfair dismissal laws removed a major impediment to employing more people and gave the sector the flexibility required to grow and invest.

Aiming to cut red tape, the Regulation Taskforce announced by the Prime Minister and Treasurer in 2005 and the \$50 million Regulation Reduction Incentive Fund have already delivered tangible benefits to the business community.

Media ownership changes

Australia's anachronistic cross-media ownership laws and foreign ownership restrictions are to be reformed.

This is sure to attract significant media coverage over the coming months and as Liberal Party members it will be useful for you to have some background knowledge of the reforms.

As chairman of the Senate's communications committee since 1998, I have seen the need for these reforms arise from huge technological changes. Information can now be delivered via the internet and mobile phone technology, and therefore this reform of media laws is necessary.

The current media-specific foreign ownership restrictions will be removed. However, the media will be retained as a 'sensitive sector' under the Foreign Investment Policy and proposals by foreign interests to directly invest in the media sector, irrespective of size, will be subject to prior approval by the Treasurer.

The cross-media ownership reforms will include a 5/4 test to prevent the undue concentration of media ownership and ensure diversity of content and opinion.

In a regional market, the number of independent commercial media owners will not be able to be reduced below four players.

In a metropolitan market, the number of independent owners cannot be reduced below five players. In most regional areas this should mean that there is little change.

The great majority of regional licence areas already have four or less media groups, so that no consolidation of ownership would be permitted in those markets.

In addition, the existing licence and reach limits will be retained, so that a person may control only one commercial television licence or two commercial radio licences in any licence area, and a person may not control commercial television licences reaching an audience of

more than 75 per cent of the Australian population. The ACCC will also continue to play a key role in ensuring that proposed media transactions are assessed for their impact on competition in relevant markets.

The existing local content requirements for regional television will not change.

The Government will also legislate to introduce minimum local content levels for regional commercial radio licensees.

In the age of new media technology the Internet and various digital platforms, consumers have a multiplicity of news and information at their disposal. By focussing on only a limited range of old media formats, the cross and foreign ownership restrictions are outdated, and unnecessarily inflexible.

Further information can be obtained from:

http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/media/media_releases/new_media_framework_for_australia

University Liberals host comedy debate

The Murdoch University Liberal left, with Murdoch University Club hosts an annual comedy Liberal Club president Chris Edwards) took the Murdoch and senior party members team on to debate the against Murdoch Liberals. merits or otherwise of reality WA MLC Peter Collier, Swan television.

division's Sandra Brown and It was hard to say who the Deputy State Opposition really won but all concerned leader Troy Buswell (pictured, enjoyed themselves.



Australian petrol prices low by comparison

Australia has traditionally been the beneficiary of low petrol prices. Despite the rapid rises we have seen in recent times, I was very interested to learn that in international terms, Australia's fuel prices remain very low. In fact, as statistics from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development show, in the March 2006 quarter Australia had the fourth lowest petrol prices of all OECD countries.

This, of course, does not detract from the fact that the sudden, sharp rise in petrol prices is putting a heavy burden on Australian families and industries. The Australian Government has recently unveiled some important initiatives to shift dependence off petrol to other energy sources.

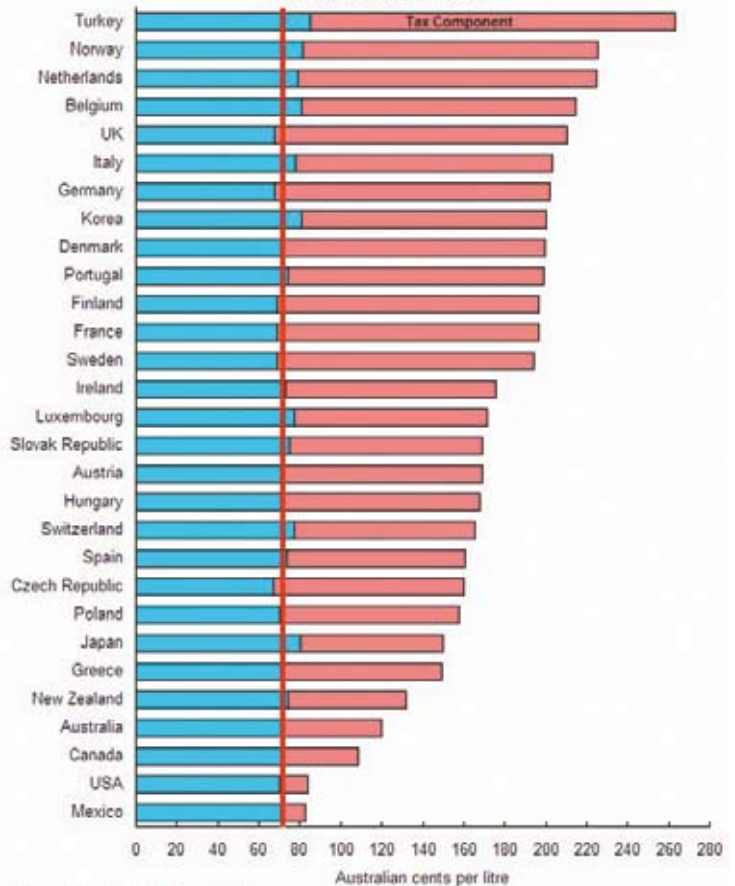
A new \$17.2 million scheme, to be available from October, will help service station operators upgrade their equipment to increase the sale of ethanol blended fuel. The Government is keen for ethanol blended fuels to become more widely available and one of the barriers is the significant cost involved in upgrading tank and fuel lines.

Additionally, a tax-free grant of \$2000 will be available to private buyers of an approved and fitted LPG conversion of a car and a tax free grant of \$1000 to private buyers of a new LPG dedicated or dual-fuel vehicle. This scheme will operate until 2014.

Finally, Federal Resources Minister Ian Macfarlane has announced a \$134 million energy security package to provide new impetus for exploration activity across Australia. The package will spur exploration throughout our continent and is aimed at capturing serious, long-term investment in Australia by explorers. This country remains mostly unexplored, particularly for petroleum in frontier offshore areas and encouraging exploration in these zones is a high priority in terms of future energy security and export markets.

Of course, world oil prices are beyond the Australian Government's control but by investing heavily in alternative fuel supplies and further exploration, we are safeguarding energy supplies for the future.

**Petrol Prices and Taxes in OECD Countries
March Quarter 2006**



Source: Australian Petroleum Statistics

Indonesian delegation visits Australia



As chairman of the Indonesian-Australian Parliamentary Friendship Group, I recently hosted a function for a group of Indonesian members of parliament who came to Australia to discuss our refugee policies.

While in Canberra, the Indonesians met with the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and the Joint Foreign Affairs and Trade Committee. The Indonesians were told that Australia respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia and that Australia places a high priority on the relationship between our two countries. Among the guests were Dr Muhammad A.S. Hikam, Dr Yusron Ihza, Dr Yuddy Chrisnandi, Boy MW Saul and Chudlary Syafi Hadzami. Pictured (left) with the Indonesian politicians were Warren Snowdon, Andrew Bartlett, Andrew Laming and myself.

3G is coming

The advantages offered by the new 3G mobile phone network were recently demonstrated at Parliament House by Optus (pictured, right) and Telstra.

3G is already available and will eventually replace Telstra's existing CDMA system. It offers an extensive range of services on the mobile handset, including internet, news and messaging. Telstra has committed to maintain its CDMA network until it can demonstrate the new network can match existing CDMA coverage.

Advantages for city and country customers include the

following:

- Country customers will experience the latest 3G services including video calling and fast mobile internet services;
- When city-based customers travel in regional areas they will get significantly improved mobile phone coverage compared to their GSM service today;
- All customers will benefit from improvements to in-building and highway coverage; and
- Access to hundreds of destinations on GSM's global roaming service.



Medicare rebates easier to claim

Medicare rebates will be easier to claim under a new system to take effect next year.

Announced by Prime Minister John Howard, the changes will enable patients to claim a Medicare rebate directly into their bank account with the swipe of a Medicare card at their doctor's surgery.

This streamlined claiming process demonstrates the Coalition Government's commitment to Medicare. It will be a huge benefit for families, avoiding the queue at a Medicare office, filling in forms or waiting for cheques. Through these arrangements, patients will pay for a doctor's visit and then swipe their Medicare card and EFTPOS card to receive their rebate back directly into their bank account. It is expected the new claiming system, via the EFTPOS network, will be available in the second half of next year. The new claiming process will not affect

bulk billed patients, although it will mean their doctor will receive payment from Medicare more quickly for providing the bulk billed service. This will be a major improvement in the way we pay doctors for bulk billed services.

Each day 80,000 people queue at a Medicare office to claim their rebate. Access Economics estimates that the average cost in time and resources to make that claim is \$10.

The private sector has indicated it can provide this technology simply and quickly and the Australian Medical Association has given its support for the proposal. It will provide real time checking for Medicare and concession status. Medicare offices, easy-claim booths and other current claiming processes will remain in place while the new system is introduced.

Medicare changes: FAQs

What is electronic Medicare claiming?
Electronic Medicare claiming is an initiative that will allow patients to lodge their Medicare claims, and receive their Medicare rebates, through an EFTPOS device in their doctor's practice. Patients need not visit a Medicare office to receive their rebate.

How does electronic Medicare claiming work?

Following your consultation with the doctor, you will pay the account, in whichever way you choose: cash, cheque, credit card or EFTPOS.

While you are at the practice:

You will swipe your Medicare card and bank card (for the account into which you want the rebate paid);

The claim will be sent to Medicare to be assessed;

Following assessment, details will be sent back to the practice;

You will be provided with a receipt.

The rebate will be deposited into your account within 24 hours.

How will electronic Medicare claiming make life easier?

With electronic Medicare claiming you will no longer need to visit a Medicare office to claim your rebate. The rebate will be paid into your nominated bank account when your claim has been processed.

Will my privacy be protected?

Yes. Electronic Medicare claiming will protect your privacy. You do not have to tell your doctor your bank account details; they will be transmitted directly to the bank when you swipe your bank card. This also means that your doctor does not have to store your bank details.

What can I do if I have paid the doctor's account but don't have a bank account or bank card?

If you do not have a bank account or a bank card, you will still be able to

receive a rebate at a Medicare office.

Can I have my rebate paid into my credit card account?

No. You will need to nominate either a cheque or savings account.

Will the bank have access to my Medicare details?

No. Your Medicare details will be sent securely between the practice and Medicare Australia.

When will electronic Medicare claiming be available?

At this stage it is expected that the rollout of electronic Medicare claiming will commence in the second half of 2007.

Why EFTPOS?

EFTPOS devices are available in most doctors' practices. Most EFTPOS devices are smart card compatible already and the major banks have all confirmed that their devices in doctor's practices will be smart card compatible by mid 2007.