

## **Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation Cultural Heritage Policy Statement**

Cultural heritage plays an ongoing and significant role in the lives of Aboriginal people, who have maintained strong cultural and spiritual affiliations to the land as a whole. The protection of heritage sites, whether an archaeological site or an area of ethnographic importance, is critical to the maintenance of Aboriginal culture and ability for Traditional Owners to exercise their native title rights and interests; many of which are cultural obligations under traditional law and custom. For example, sites may require protection, may need to be avoided, may be only accessed by men or women, or may form parts of important stories which may be passed down through Aboriginal law.

- ***Cultural heritage is central to the identity, laws, customs and cultures of the Traditional Owners of the land. The protection of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is of paramount importance to the futures of Yamatji and Marlpa people and the exercise of native title rights and interests, law and custom.***

YMAC does not receive Government funding to provide Cultural Heritage Services, but given the importance of heritage protection to Traditional Owners, has been providing these services since 1994. Any surplus funds derived from the income from the coordination of heritage surveys is only used for providing native title and heritage protection services.

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is a strong representative and advocate for the interests of Traditional Owners in the Pilbara and Yamatji regions. This focus on Traditional Owners and their knowledge, beliefs, and values underpins YMAC's heritage management strategy at all times. YMAC believes that Traditional Owners are the owners of their own heritage and good heritage practise should support Traditional Owner agency throughout the process of heritage identification, recording, and ongoing management.

All aspects of YMAC's practice is centred on upholding the following key principles that support the heritage aspirations of the groups we represent.

- Empowering Native Title groups and capacity building to foster group's ability to manage their own heritage;
- Encourage meaningful engagement in the heritage space that gives purpose to YMAC's mission of recognition and acceptance of Yamatji and Pilbara country and culture;
- Operate in the heritage space in a way that gives purpose to YMAC's mission of a strong and vibrant future for Yamatji and Pilbara people;
- Ensure Aboriginal heritage is properly managed as directed by groups we represent/our clients;
- Ensure best practice standards are used by consultants including impartiality and independence, as well as making sure that statutory obligations are met; and
- We advocate that heritage is an interdisciplinary practise best undertaken by both archaeologists and anthropologists, and always in conjunction with relevant Traditional Owner participants.

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