



Yamatji Marlpa

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

8 July 2014

Proposed changes to Aboriginal Heritage Laws

The WA Government has recently released draft legislation for public comment that proposes changes to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* (WA). Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is very concerned about these changes. These changes appear to be aimed at speeding up the approvals process for developers and mining companies, but do very little to improve protection for Aboriginal heritage.

The Amendment Bill follows on from a discussion paper released by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) in 2012. YMAC and many other Aboriginal organisations and people told the DAA about their concerns with the proposals back in 2012. Most of those concerns have not been listened to.

YMAC has long maintained that the Aboriginal Heritage Act does not adequately protect Aboriginal heritage and needs to be significantly improved. We consider that the Government's proposed changes are a wasted opportunity to overhaul the legislation; to make it work for Aboriginal people by putting their rights and interests front and centre. The Aboriginal Heritage Act should be culturally appropriate and respectful of traditions and it should recognise the rights of Traditional Owners to participate in decisions that could impact their sites.

YMAC will be making a formal submission outlining our concerns with the draft legislation and we encourage Traditional Owners to make their own submissions. The attached fact sheet gives some information about the proposed changes and what they will mean for you and your country. For more information and the full text of the *Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Bill* go to www.daa.wa.gov.au and click on "Aboriginal heritage legislative changes" on the front page, or call 1800 727 985. The deadline for submissions is **6 August**.

Please share this information with your family and friends, so the DAA knows that Aboriginal people in WA want more say over what happens to their heritage.

Yours Faithfully,

Doris Eaton and Victor Mourambine

How to make a submission:

1. Read the attached fact sheet and go to www.daa.wa.gov.au or call the DAA on 1800 727 985 to find out about the amendments
2. Send your comments to aha.reform@daa.wa.gov.au or
Chief Heritage Officer
Department of Aboriginal Affairs
PO Box 3153
EAST PERTH WA 6892
3. The deadline for submissions is 6 August 2014