



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

MEDIA RELEASE
Proposed Heritage Reforms
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Today the WA Government released a Discussion Paper canvassing seven proposals to reform the Aboriginal Heritage protection regime. Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation's initial view is that a range of issues that will need to be addressed if the reforms are to strengthen the protection of Aboriginal heritage and the increase the involvement of Traditional Owners in that process.

Simon Hawkins, YMAC CEO, says "For Traditional Owners, the current Act is more a licence to destroy heritage than a mechanism to protect it. These proposals will only reinforce this view."

The proposals focus too much on the approval process for industry and not enough on improving processes for the effective conservation and protection of Aboriginal heritage sites.

The Government acknowledges in the Discussion Paper that there has been no formal consultation on the proposed changes to date, including with Aboriginal people. Nonetheless, the proposals seem to be decided and the language in the Discussion Paper reflects that.

Mr Hawkins says "Aboriginal people are not just another set of stakeholders. This is their heritage and they deserve an opportunity to provide meaningful input into the reform process. I am sceptical about the current process and of course the short timeframe will not allow for all those negatively affected to have their say."

The Government is claiming that the changes will improve the involvement of Aboriginal people in the process and strengthen protection of Aboriginal heritage. However, the proposals hand control over to Departmental officers to decide what a significant heritage site is and how it should be managed. This is simply not good enough.

Protecting heritage is essential for Traditional Owners to be able to exercise their native title rights. Unless they have a formal role in the protection of Aboriginal heritage, the whole community should remain sceptical as to the fairness and rigor of the process.

About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for native title claims in the resource-rich Pilbara, Murchison and Gascoyne representative areas of Western Australia.



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The organisation has a representative area of almost one million square kilometres and represents around 25 native title claims, all with their own language, culture and traditions.

YMAC is run by an Aboriginal Board and provides a range of services to its members including claim and future-act representation, heritage protection services, community and economic development and natural resource management.

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