



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

Traditional Owners welcome Auditor General's findings on heritage protection

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The Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) welcomes the findings of the recent Auditor General's report on compliance with mining conditions, which highlights what Traditional Owners already know: that Aboriginal heritage in WA is not being adequately protected by the State.

The Auditor General found that the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA), which administers the *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, has failed in its responsibility to monitor compliance with conditions it places on miners for protection of heritage sites. The report states that DIA "has only undertaken inspections of heritage sites when responding to complaints it received, but has taken no enforcement action when it has found non-compliance."

Peter Jeffries, Acting CEO of YMAC, said today, "The AHA operates more as an approval mechanism for the destruction of Aboriginal heritage than as a means for protecting it. YMAC has worked hard over the years to make sure agreements are in place between native title groups and companies to protect heritage. If it weren't for these private agreements, there would be no real protection for Aboriginal heritage in areas of high development like the Pilbara and Midwest. This report has shown that there are no consequences for illegally destroying Aboriginal heritage in the course of mining projects."

The report highlights the need to improve the processes for protecting Aboriginal heritage in WA. A review of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* was announced in June 2011, but past reviews have not led to improvements in the system.

"We sincerely hope that the review of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* leads to major reform that takes into account the importance of our State's Aboriginal heritage and gives Aboriginal people a significant say in how approvals to destroy heritage are granted," said Mr. Jeffries.

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation is one of the nations leading Indigenous corporations, representing 24 Traditional Owner groups in the Midwest and Pilbara regions of Western Australia.

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