



Yamatji Marlpa

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

WA GOVERNMENT ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE REFORMS

YMAC is the Native Title Representative Body for the Pilbara and Geraldton regions of Western Australia, areas subject to significant mining and development and subsequent pressures on Aboriginal cultural heritage. YMAC provides heritage services to a number of Native Title groups in these regions, and several groups also manage their own heritage services. YMAC also represents Aboriginal cultural heritage interests through the Native Title process.

We have maintained that the WA Aboriginal Heritage Act (AHA) does not provide adequate protection for Aboriginal Heritage and needs to be significantly improved, and that Native Title processes are what actually provide protection for Aboriginal sites, not the AHA.

The WA Government announced a review of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage processes in 2011, including that there would be a consultative process during the review. There has been no formal process of consultation, until the recent release of a discussion paper detailing proposed priority reforms to the Aboriginal Heritage processes. The Discussion Paper, located on the DIA Website, sets out seven proposals for comment in written submissions within five weeks.

Although the proposals are not clear, we consider that the proposals further water down the already inadequate protection of Aboriginal heritage in WA, and do not recognise the well established Native Title processes, representative Traditional Owner structures and organisations in place. It also appears that the proposed reforms have been heavily influenced by the mining sector in responding to their concerns about expediting heritage approvals processes, and do not reflect Traditional Owner concerns about heritage protection.

YMAC is very concerned about these proposals, and will be making a written submission outlining these issues. We are also concerned about the short timeframe for consultation on such significant changes to the protection of Aboriginal heritage.

We would appreciate your interest in this process and in raising awareness about the potentially adverse impact of the proposed reforms, which is focussed on meeting the needs of the State Government, mining and development interests, not the protection of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in WA.

Yours faithfully

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