

**YAMATJI MARLPA BARNA BABA MAAJA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
YAMATJI LAND AND SEA COUNCIL
PILBARA NATIVE TITLE SERVICE**

NATIVE TITLE REPRESENTATIVE BODY

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ngarla Native Title Recognised

Today Federal Court Justice Annabelle Bennett travelled to the De Grey River (East Pilbara) to make a consent determination of native title, recognising the Ngarla people as the rightful owners of their land.

The consent determination is the result of more than eleven years of negotiations between the Ngarla community, their representatives the Pilbara Native Title Service, the State Government and other proponents including pastoralists and mining companies.

As native title holders, the Ngarla community will have non-exclusive native title rights and interests over approximately 11,000 square kilometres of East Pilbara land.

The rights include the right to enter and remain on land, camp, hunt, fish, gather and use resources of the land and waters (excluding minerals), engage in rituals and ceremonies, protect areas of cultural significance and make decisions about using the land in accordance with traditional law. It will also provide Ngarla people with a guarantee that they must be consulted regarding development on their land.

The decision was welcomed by members of the Ngarla community and West Australia's Deputy Premier Eric Ripper, who were at De Grey River to celebrate with speeches and traditional songs.

"It has taken a long time, but I'm happy that us elders can pass this onto the next generation," said Ngarla elder Charlie Coppin.

"It's important for our people and culture to get recognition of our land, and I'm glad its come to a close."

“Today’s decision is significant for Ngarla people and also for other native title claimants in the Pilbara region,” said Simon Hawkins, Pilbara Native Title Service Executive Director.

“There is still much work to be done to ensure the rightful recognition of native title claims in the region and we hope that this will be the first of many determinations to come.”

The Ngarla determination is the first native title determination for the Pilbara Native Title Service, and occurs during National Reconciliation Week, marking the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum to recognise Aboriginal people as Australian citizens. The week will also be the anniversary of the historic 1992 Mabo decision, recognising the native title rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Ngarla and De Grey Station

The recognition of Ngarla’s native title occurred at the De Grey Station, one of the first stations established by European settlers in 1863. Ngarla leaders working on De Grey Station were at the centre of the 1946 Pilbara Strike, the first ever industrial action by Indigenous Australians. The Pilbara Strike lasted until 1949, making it the longest strike in Australia's history.

Ngarla and the Resource Boom

The resource-rich Ngarla land is playing a major part in the Pilbara’s iron ore mining boom. In 2006 Ngarla people signed an agreement with Atlas Iron Limited over the Pardoo Project, a mine located approximately 75 kilometres east of Port Hedland. The agreement paved the way for the company to begin iron ore mining and, in return, gives significant benefits to the traditional owners of the land.

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