

# YMATAC

news

News from Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

ISSUE 28 | OCTOBER 2015



country  
culture  
people  
future

*Jurruru Traditional Owner Ivan Smirke on his Country*



Yamatji Marlpa  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

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Caution: Readers please be advised this publication may contain the names, images, and words of deceased persons. We apologise for any distress this may cause.

## Hello and Welcome



*Pilbara Co-Chair Mrs Doris Eaton*



*Yamatji Co-Chair Mr Ben Roberts*

Hello and welcome to this edition of YMAC News. This spring has been an extraordinary time for many Traditional Owners in the Pilbara. In September the Federal Court travelled north to make two determinations of native title out on-Country. As Co-Chairs we were privileged to be on Jurruru Country and Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura (PKKP) Country when Justice McKerracher made these historic Determinations. The Jurruru and PKKP Traditional Owners are now recognised native title holders and can move forward toward their next goals. We and everyone at YMAC hope we can say the same for other claim groups soon.

In late September we met with members of State Parliament and Traditional Owners from all over WA

to discuss the proposed amendments to the Aboriginal Heritage Act and the Government's Regional Services Reform. For the second year we met at the traditional meeting place at Yule River, and we plan to continue meeting there annually. While this is quickly growing into an important annual event, it is worrying that for the second year the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has decided not to attend or even send a representative.

We look forward to seeing all of the YMAC members at the Annual Regional Meetings in South Hedland and Kalbarri in November so we can share the year's accomplishments, take your feedback and talk about the year ahead.



# Knowledge Partnerships: Looking after Country

July 16 2015 was a significant day for the Nyangumarta People with the dedication ceremony of their Indigenous Protected Area (IPA). An IPA is an area of land and/or sea over which Indigenous Traditional Owners have entered into a voluntary agreement with the Australian government for the purposes of promoting biodiversity and cultural resource conservation.

The Nyangumarta IPA covers about 28,420 km<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the Nyangumarta Rangers according to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) standards. This combines meaningful Aboriginal employment with the fulfilment of cultural obligations by Traditional Owners.

Simon Hawkins, CEO of YMAC, said this type of work is succeeding where many other programs have failed.

“The Nyangumarta People want to look after their Country. Today’s dedication ceremony of the IPA is a great example of a successful program which has been developed and applied in consultation with, and under the guidance of the Traditional Owners.



“What we are facing though, is funding uncertainty for these types of programs. There is currently a restriction on federal funding for Ranger jobs and IPAs. With more funding of these types of programs, we’d see more positive outcomes on Country,” he said.

Nyaparur Rose, CEO of Nyangumarta Warrarn Aboriginal Corporation says that while the official recognition of the Nyangumarta IPA has been a long process, it has been worth it.

“As a Nyangumarta elder, I am very proud of this achievement for the Nyangumarta People. Having our IPA will allow us to maintain our significant sites, and look after our Country – from the desert to the sea.”

The day was marked with the signing of the official IPA certificate between the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet and the Nyangumarta Warrarn Aboriginal Corporation.



*Top: Nyangumarta elder Nyaparur Rose*

*Bottom: Nyangumarta dancers perform at the dedication ceremony*



# Jurruru on-Country Determination

On 1 September the Jurruru People celebrated the legal recognition of their land and culture at a Federal Court hearing to recognise their native title rights.

Justice Neil McKerracher made the determination recognising the Jurruru People's non-exclusive rights to the land. The Jurruru native title determination application was filed in 2000. Jurruru Country covers approximately 10,500 km<sup>2</sup> of land in the Southwest Pilbara region. This determination recognised the Jurruru people's rights and interests over about 7000 km<sup>2</sup> of their Country, referred to as 'Part A'.



*Top left: Jurruru Traditional Owners at the determination.  
Bottom Page spread: Jurruru Country*



The Jurruru People, along with representatives from government and pastoral industries attended the Court hearing, held on-Country at Perrys Flat, on Kooline pastoral station, west of Paraburadoo.

Ivan Smirke, Jurruru Traditional Owner said, "Native title is not

a lease or a title of ownership of land but recognition, respect and acknowledgement of the wider Australian community and its leaders of our nation that the laws, culture and heritage of our ancestors still exist".

Simon Hawkins, CEO of YMAC said it was reassuring to see the Jurruru people gain official recognition through a consent determination.

"Today is a great day for the Jurruru people. It's positive to see a consent determination take place, rather than the intense pressure a trial places on Traditional Owners and elders.

"I hope to see the State move toward many more consent determinations," he said.



*Left: Jurruru determination on-Country*

“...the laws, culture and heritage of our ancestors still exist.

-Ivan Smirke”



# PKKP Peoples' Determination



On 2 September 2015, the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura (PKKP) Peoples celebrated the legal recognition of their land and culture at a Federal Court hearing recognising their native title rights.

Justice Neil McKerracher made the consent determination recognising the PKKP Peoples' non-exclusive rights to the land. The PKKP native title determination application was filed in 2001 and covers approximately 9,500 km<sup>2</sup> of land in the Shire of Ashburton in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

The PKKP Peoples, along with representatives from government, mining and pastoral industries attended the Court hearing,

held on-Country at House Creek, near the homestead on Mt Stuart Station, about 200 kilometres northwest of Paraburdoo. The determination area is directly north of the Jurruru people's determination, which was handed down on Tuesday 1 September.

Mitchell Drage, PKKP Traditional Owner, said "We're all one family, and now this journey has finally ended. We've always known who we are and where our Country is, but now we've been formally recognised by the Court. This gives us an opportunity to move forward as a family."

*Above : PKKP People with Justice McKerracher*



Simon Hawkins, CEO of YMAC, said it was a great day for the PKKP peoples.

“Today is very significant for the Traditional Owners of this Country. After 14 long years I am very glad that this could finally be settled with the State Government’s consent, rather than having to go through a stressful and expensive trial.

“I look forward to more consent determinations, so native title groups can move on to the next stage,” he said.

The PKKP native title claim is made up of two separate but related language groups, the Puutu Kunti Kurrama People and the Pinikura People, who together claim rights and interests within the claim area.



*PKKP Native Title Holders*

“ We’re all one family and now this journey has finally ended. ”

-Mitchell Drage



*PKKP Country*



# Yule River meeting demands fairness for Aboriginal people

Over 300 people gathered at Yule River in the Pilbara to voice their anger and outrage over the State Government's Aboriginal Heritage Act Amendment Bill and the Regional Services Reform plan, which focuses on assessing the sustainability of Aboriginal communities across Western Australia.

Hosted on Friday 25 September by YMAC's Pilbara Regional Committee, the discussions were led by YMAC Co-Chair and respected Njamal Elder Mrs Doris Eaton and respected Banjima Elder Mr Maitland Parker.

Those present at the meeting included Traditional Owners from all over Western Australia, Aboriginal representative bodies from the Pilbara and Kimberley regions, including the Kimberley Land Council's Deputy CEO, Tyrone Garstone and several Board Members, members of Parliament including Terry Redman, Minister for Regional Development, Helen Morton, Minister for Child Protection, Ben Wyatt, Shadow Spokesman for Aboriginal Affairs, Robin Chapple, Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region, Brendon Grylls, Member for Pilbara and Greg McIntyre SC.

The annual on-Country bush meeting gave attendees to rare opportunity to question Minister Redman and Minister Morton on the Regional Services Reform plan which was announced in May.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Peter Collier declined the invitation to speak and did not send a representative in his place, for the second year.

YMAC Co-Chair and respected Njamal elder, Doris Eaton spoke about the WA government's inability to close the gap.

"The gap is widening. You do not listen to us. Until you speak with people at the grassroots you will never close the gap.

How long is it going to take the government to listen to us? We will come together as a whole group and fight for our rights – because if we don't do it, no one else will do it for us.

"Here I am – the next generation I'm still fighting for basic equality. How many generations will come after me before this happens?" she said.

Simon Hawkins, CEO of YMAC, said the bush meeting is a sign that Aboriginal voices are still not being heard by the government.

"This is the second year we've hosted this meeting and I find it outrageous that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is still refusing to meet with Aboriginal people.

"If the Premier and his government are serious about the recognition of Aboriginal people in the Western Australian Constitution, he and his Ministers need to implement basic, practical measures to this legislation which was designed to protect Australia's First Peoples' heritage – procedural fairness should be first and foremost, not an afterthought," Mr Hawkins said.



**Knowledge Partnerships: putting culture first**

*Speakers at the Yule River meeting*



Following the meeting, all attendees passed the following resolutions on the two issues:

### **Aboriginal Heritage Act Amendment Bill Discussion**

Resolution: The Community demands that procedural fairness is in the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* (WA) for decisions affecting the heritage of Traditional Owners, and that other legal challenges available to protect threatened heritage sites be investigated.

A delegation will again be sent to Parliament to seek a meeting with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Peter Collier MLC.

The Government will ensure the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will attend the Annual On-Country Bush Meeting each year.

### **Aboriginal Community Closures Discussion**

Resolution: The Community demands a commitment from the State Government to engage with Aboriginal leaders, organisations and service providers to:

1. Develop terms of reference for the Kimberley and Pilbara Strategic Regional Advisory Councils;
2. Address these issues more broadly across Western Australia, beyond only forming advisory councils in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions;
3. Ensure decisions are made with the direct involvement of and for the genuine benefit of Aboriginal communities; and that
4. The Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Child Protection agree to attend the 2016 Annual On-Country Bush Meeting at the Yule River Meeting Place, to provide a report on Aboriginal engagement and the advances that have been made to improve remote Western Australian Aboriginal communities.



*Some of the attendees at the on-Country bush meeting*



# Meet a YMAC committee member

Dion Harris is a Naaguja Wajarri man from Northampton. Dion was elected to the Yamatji Regional Committee at the Yamatji Annual Regional Meeting on 29 November 2014. To Dion going out on-Country can be very healing and it is an important part of keeping healthy.

"Being connected to Country means getting out there as often as you can," said Dion. He believes it is important to educate more people about Country to protect the heritage and culture of these sites.

He learned a lot from his grandfather who was a Wajarri elder. "My grandfather lived around the Mount Augustus area in the Gascoyne and we use to camp out at my grandmother's house," Dion says. He has strong convictions in passing down this knowledge to future generations.

Dion lived with his family in Perth for 8 years but then moved back to his Country in Northampton. He is teaching his kids the culture of his side of the family now and later they will learn about their mum's side. His wife is a Noongyar woman from Northam.

To Dion, it is important to show his kids how important traditions are so that they know how to carry on with them. He takes them fishing and they go to the beach in summer as he is now focusing on teaching them the coastal side of their traditions. "I take the kids down to the Greenough River and up to the Murchison River," he said.

“ Being connected to Country means getting out there to visit, as often as you can. ”  
-Dion Harris



Dion attended Curtin University where he studied geology. One of the strong interests he has is in creating more employment and education opportunities for young people in his community.

One of the interesting things that Dion does is make Kangaroo skin footballs. He has been making this style of footballs since 2007. It started out as a hobby but he hopes to develop it into a business.

"I get the skins from a pet shop, tan the skins and then I sew them together," Dion said of his football making skill. Before he started making the footballs he made knife pouches and wallets. A few of the footys have been sold to sports stores and some have been bought by people who have sent them on to Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia.



# In Memoriam



*YMAC Board of Directors, Regional Committees and Staff would like to pass our condolences onto the families and friends of Mr A. Cheedy.*

*Mr Cheedy worked at YMAC's Pilbara offices for several years first as a Liaison Officer and then as the Regional Manager of the Pilbara.*

*Mr Cheedy was a strong activist for the rights of Aboriginal People and we are all saddened by his passing.*

## Annual Regional Meetings

Each year YMAC holds two Annual Regional Meetings (ARMs), one in each representative region. The ARMs are an opportunity for YMAC members to meet with their Regional Committee and members of YMAC's Executive Management Team and discuss YMAC's operations and achievements of the past year.

This year's ARMs will be held on:

**Pilbara: Saturday, 7 November 2015, JD Hardie Centre in South Hedland, 10am**

**Yamatji: Saturday, 28 November 2015, Kalbarri Sport and Recreation Centre, 10am**

All YMAC members are eligible and encouraged to attend their relevant ARM. Meeting notices are being sent to all members. Please contact your nearest YMAC office for more information on the ARMs.



# country culture people future

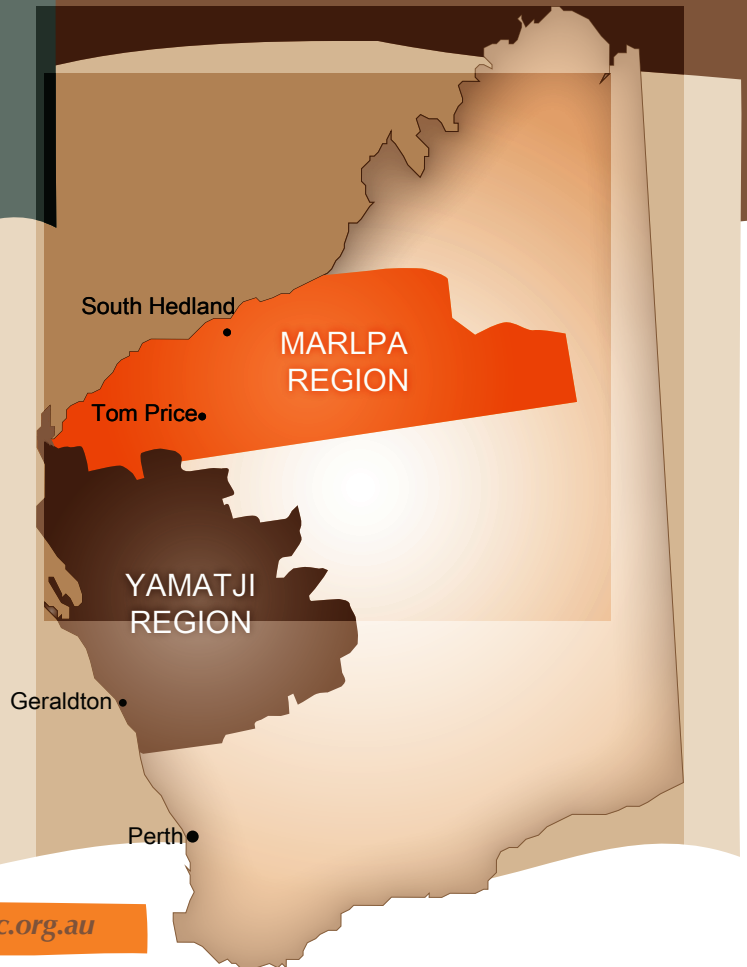
## ABOUT US

YMAC News is produced by the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC).

We are the native title representative body for native title claims in the Murchison, Gascoyne and Pilbara regions of Western Australia.

We work with Yamatji and Marlpa (Pilbara) Aboriginal people to pursue:

- Recognition and acceptance of Yamatji and Marlpa culture in country
- A strong future for Yamatji and Marlpa people and country



Send your questions, ideas, letters or photos to [editor@ymac.org.au](mailto:editor@ymac.org.au)

## MEMBERSHIP

YMAC membership is open to all adult (18+ years) Yamatji and Marlpa people. Our membership also includes people who live in other areas but who have a traditional connection to Yamatji or Marlpa country.

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## SERVICES

Our work includes:

- Providing legal representation and research to assist with native title claims
- Negotiating land use agreements
- Heritage protection services
- Community, economic and environmental projects

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