

## MEDIA ALERT

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### **ANNOUNCEMENT:**

### **ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT WORKSHOP, 18-19 JANUARY 2022**

Aboriginal people invite government and industry to co-design a new law to stop the destruction of Australia's cultural heritage at the inaugural **Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act Workshop**.

**Aboriginal people believe the proposed ACH Bill (2021) will fail to deliver** on the State Government's commitment to better protect Aboriginal heritage in Western Australia, place Aboriginal people at the centre of our heritage protection regime and deliver better decision making in land use proposals for stakeholders, industry and the community. The State Government has not yet provided the Bill in its entirety to the Aboriginal community.

**Co-design between Aboriginal people, government and industry is critical** to create legislation that genuinely addresses the shortcomings of the past and protects Australia's precious Indigenous cultural heritage. Aboriginal people welcome government and industry to the negotiating table to get the job done. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act Workshop provides a time and place to co-create a new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act for WA, as well as define frameworks for policies, regulations and processes to support implementation.

#### **Key focus areas for the workshop agenda include:**

- Co-design legislation strong enough to stop another disaster.
- A right of appeal that does not give the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs the final say over what happens to Aboriginal sites.
- Remove the reliance on 'goodwill' that miners, pastoralists and others will be prepared to reach agreements with Aboriginal people that avoid damaging Australia's cultural heritage.
- Address legal and cultural concerns, including meeting the standards set out by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [UNDRIP].
- Define 'best practice' in the field of cultural heritage management and protection.

The Joint Standing Committee's report on the destruction of 46,000-year-old rock caves in the Pilbara was **highly critical of the WA Government and its proposed new, controversial Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill**. A new law that ensures the right balance between heritage protection and economic benefit is needed. Aboriginal people want to sit down with government and industry to create an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act for WA that will stop the destruction of significant sites without stopping development.

**Aboriginal people are not feeling heard on areas of key concern, such as informed consent and the right to say no.** In the spirit of co-creation Aboriginal people have made repeated requests to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to convene a substantive meeting between Traditional Owners and the organisations that support them, industry stakeholders and Government. To date those requests have gone unanswered, as have the many requests to see a copy of the ACH Bill (2021).

The reality is that little information has been made available to show how - in practice - heritage will be able to be protected by the owners of Australia's cultural heritage in Western Australia. It is critical to make the time to negotiate with those who will be impacted most.

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act Workshop on 18-19 January 2022 is an important next

step in our continued campaign to protect the world's oldest living continuous culture. To stop the destruction without stopping development.

Regular updates will be provided in the coming weeks.

For more information: [www.ProtectAboriginalHeritageWA.org.au](http://www.ProtectAboriginalHeritageWA.org.au)

### **Media contacts**

For more information or interviews, please contact:

**YMAC:** Fiona Jones on 0439 360 979 or email [fjones@ymac.org.au](mailto:fjones@ymac.org.au)

**SWALSC:** Amanda Rainey on 0421 391 719 or email [amanda.rainey@noongar.org.au](mailto:amanda.rainey@noongar.org.au)

**NTSG:** David Lanagan on 0439 997 373 or email [davidlanagan@ntsg.org.au](mailto:davidlanagan@ntsg.org.au)

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### **KEY POINTS ABOUT THE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT WORKSHOP:**

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act Workshop, 18-19 January 2022.
- Agenda and format to enable the systematic review of all elements of the ACH Bill (2021) where the draft falls short of the WA Government's commitment to better protect Aboriginal heritage in Western Australia, place Aboriginal people at the centre of our heritage protection regime, and deliver better decision-making in land use proposals for stakeholders, industry and the community.
- Equitable representation and participation from all key stakeholder groups to ensure informed discussion that leads to negotiated outcomes.
- Key stakeholders will be empowered and enabled to work together in harmony guided by jointly defined and agreed criteria.
- Aboriginal people invite government, industry and cultural heritage professionals to co-design a new law that ensures the right balance between heritage protection and economic benefit.
- Event organisers include Aboriginal people supported by members of the WA Alliance of Native Title Representative Bodies and Service Providers who work with them to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.