



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



*(Warning: Please be advised, images included here contain people who have passed away.
Please view with discretion.)*

18 November 2021

An open letter to the McGowan Government:

Despite your obvious persistence to rush through the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021*, we are not yet ready to feel defeated, and we are still determined for you to hear our voice. And while we are extremely frustrated by your actions this week, we do not write this letter simply out of anger; instead, it is an overwhelming sense of disappointment and sadness that is currently compelling us to do so.

Seven years ago, almost to the day, a number of you stood with us and shared our concerns over the legislative changes being proposed by the then Barnett Government. While in Opposition, you supported us when we were calling to have our voice heard, and you agreed with us that Aboriginal people need to be listened to when it comes to protecting *our* cultural heritage¹.

But, now, it seems like you have forgotten all about that – and we are left feeling like pawns being used for political gain.

While Traditional Owners again took to Parliament yesterday, to speak about our concerns, you were no longer standing beside us on those steps; instead, you were inside getting ready to introduce a bill that we have consistently and clearly told you that we do not accept.

We want to talk to you (and industry), so *together* we can develop a law that we can all work with. But you don't want to talk to us. You keep saying you've "consulted", but we keep telling you that there is still work to be done. But you ignore us. We don't think we are being unreasonable – isn't this something worthy enough of wanting to get it right?

This isn't about politics for us, this is about us protecting our cultural heritage.

While you may want to leave a legacy by being able to claim you got this bill through Parliament; the legacy we want to leave behind is ensuring our sites of significance, our cultural heritage, our spiritual connection to Country, is protected for our future generations. You can replace an act, but we can't replace our cultural heritage.

Signed,

Mr Peter Windie
Co-Chairperson, Yamatji Region

Mrs Natalie Parker
Co-Chairperson, Pilbara Region

PERTH

Level 8,
12-14 The Esplanade
Perth WA 6000

PO Box 3072
249 Hay Street
Perth WA 6892

T (08) 9268 7000
F (08) 9225 4633

GERALDTON

171 Marine Terrace
Geraldton WA 6530

PO Box 2119
Geraldton WA 6531

T (08) 9965 6222
F (08) 9964 5646

HEDLAND

2/29 Steel Loop
Wedgefield WA 6721

PO Box 2252
South Hedland
WA 6722

T (08) 9160 3800
F (08) 9140 1277

BROOME

Lot 640 Dora Street
Broome WA 6725

Yamatji Marlpa
Aboriginal Corporation
is a Native Title
Representative Body
ICN 2001
ABN 14 011 921 883

ymac.org.au

¹ [Protesters in WA present petition against changes to Aboriginal Heritage Act - ABC News](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-18/protesters-in-wa-present-petition-against-changes-to-aboriginal-heritage-act/10128244)



20 November 2014: Traditional Owners from across Western Australia at Parliament House to present a petition by Mrs Doris Eaton in response to the 2014 amendment bill to then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Peter Collier, Brendon Grylls, and Ben Wyatt



17 November 2021: YMAC's Deputy Co-Chairperson, Pilbara Region, Mrs Doris Eaton, addressing the press conference at Parliament House (Courtesy of: Carolyn Betts)

Yamatji Marlpa
Aboriginal Corporation
is a Native Title
Representative Body
ICN 2001
ABN 14 011 921 883

ymac.org.au