



## Landmark Indigenous Land Use Agreement and Yamatji Nation Claim consent determination celebrated in Geraldton

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*Photo: Hon. Justice Debra Mortimer celebrates with Yamatji Nation Claim native title holders, Ken Wyatt AM, MP, Ben Wyatt MLA, State Government staff and legal representatives involved in the hearing.*

*Photographer: José Kalpers (YMAC)*

Today in Geraldton was a unique day for Australian native title history. In a highly anticipated on-Country Federal Court hearing the people who form the Yamatji Nation Claim celebrated their native title determination, and the signing of a landmark Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) with the State Government of Western Australia.

This is the first time in Australian native title history that such an agreement - that includes both native title recognition and an economic package composed of cash and assets of this calibre - has been achieved.

The comprehensive package includes recognition of native title for the Yamatji Nation Claim over several parcels of land; housing assets for lease, sale or development; capital; additional investment for business and tourism development; access to water reserves; and employment opportunities.

As native title holders, the Yamatji Nation will now have non-exclusive possession rights over portions of the former Barnong, Menai Hills and Kadji Kadji pastoral leases, land parcels near the Wanda Nature Reserve, Lucky Bay, and the Aboriginal Lands Trust areas in Carnamah, Kadathini and Eneabba.

A Conservation Estate will be created with joint vesting and joint management opportunities that empowers Traditional Owners to be able to care for their Country. In addition, unmanaged and unallocated reserve land will be returned.

The totality of the settlement is of a scale that could transform the community into a successful and thriving economic force in the Mid West region of WA.

The ILUA is the outcome of successful negotiations between the State Government and Traditional Owners in the Mid-West that commenced in 2017 and is known as the Yamatji Nation Southern Regional Agreement (YNSRA).

The YNSRA includes the overarching Yamatji Nation Claim, and includes the underlying claims of Southern Yamatji, Hutt River, Mullewa Wadjari and Widi Mob. Descendants of additional ancestors of those who were not included in the original underlying claims are also included in the claim (which is known as, the **Yamatji Nation Claim**).

Negotiations to resolve native title in the region were extensively supported by Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) over several years. YMAC coordinated the negotiations and provided support in several ways. Connection research provided to the State coupled with strong negotiation by Traditional Owners and legal advisors resulted in the State incorporating native title as part of the settlement package.

YMAC has also been privileged to provide legal services to members of the Yamatji Nation Claim, and to the underlying Southern Yamatji, and Hutt River claim groups.

Mr Simon Hawkins, CEO YMAC said, “This has been a long journey for Traditional Owners and YMAC appreciates the dedication and patience shown by all parties to achieve this fantastic outcome. This Agreement will change the relationship between Traditional Owners and Government, and we believe it can serve as a blue-print for future agreement making of this nature.

“The package negotiated is comprehensive. It empowers Traditional Owners and provides economic and other opportunities that will assist in Closing the Gap.

“One of the challenges for the State will be to provide sufficient resources at their end to ensure the relationship develops and prospers in years to come”.

Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt AM was also present to witness the historic event, together with the Federal Court, senior representatives of the State Government, other parties and most importantly, the Traditional Owners.

*All quotes to be attributed to Mr Simon Hawkins, CEO Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation.*

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### **About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation**

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for the Pilbara, Murchison, Mid West and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. YMAC has a representative area of over one-third of WA and represents over 20 Traditional Owner groups - all with their own language, culture and traditions. YMAC is a not-for-profit organisation run by an Aboriginal Board of Directors and provides a range of services to its members including claim and future-act representation, heritage protection services, community and economic development and natural resource management.

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For interviews please contact:

Kylie Stirk, Communications Officer, mobile 0458 010 483, email [editor@ymac.or](mailto:editor@ymac.or)