



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Ningaloo ILUA realises Elders' dream

MEDIA RELEASE: Tuesday 4 August 2020



Photo: Ningaloo coastline, courtesy of Rachael Cooyou

The dream of Elders at Cardabia Station to manage their Country has finally been made real by their children and siblings after 30 years. At an on-Country event held at Coral Bay on Tuesday 4 August 2020, Baiyungu and Thalanyji Traditional Owners formally entered into the Ningaloo Body Corporate Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA), with the State Government of Western Australia.

The ILUA enables the creation of a recreation and conservation reserve along the Ningaloo Coast, from the former Ningaloo pastoral lease to Red Bluff (currently called “the Ningaloo Coastal Reserve”). It includes additional areas of land and water to be added into the current Cape Range National Park, the Ningaloo Marine Park, and the creation of easements.

The conservation estate will be jointly vested and managed by a joint management body, comprised of representatives of Nganhurra Thanardi Garrbu Aboriginal Corporation (NTGAC) and Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

Joint Management Body Chairperson Paul Baron said it has been one incredible journey to reach the agreement, and to see their Prescribed Body Corporate officially named as a partner on the ILUA and title.

“It was more than three decades ago that our Elders had this notion of having a management role in taking care of our Country. Unfortunately, many who began this work are not with us to celebrate. It’s the result of a lot of effort, working as a group and with the staff at Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC). We’ve spent many long hours around the table with the State working through how joint management will operate, and to get the backing needed to recognise the importance of our storytelling,” Mr Baron said.

“Our culture and heritage is vitally important. It is central to our recognition as Traditional Owners, and our ownership of the role we will play.

“This agreement paves the way for future generations. We know the most important part is that it creates opportunity for Traditional Owners to be involved in tourism. It gives us a chance to contribute to this sector in a meaningful way with what has so much significance to us and our identity. We are excited and grateful that this amazing Country will be celebrated, and appreciated by visitors who will depart with more knowledge of this land than what has previously been available.”

NTGAC Chairperson Rachael Cooyou’s mother was a key member of the Traditional Owner group at Cardabia Station, who had the vision for their people. She said it was wonderful that this long held dream has finally come to be for current and future generations.

“The ILUA formalises what we have been doing and want to do for our Country. Now after all this time, we have not just the recognition, but also the resources and support to have our own people on the ground. Our people’s self-respect, and self-worth is able to grow as we are able to give back to something that is so important to us. We are also able to share with others something that is part of our being and identity. Something we are so proud of, our Country,” she said.

YMAC Chief Executive Officer Simon Hawkins said it was exciting to see the Baiyungu and Thalanyji people become partners in the management of their Country, particularly so soon after the group’s native title determination in December 2019.

“YMAC staff are so proud to have supported the Baiyungu and Thalanyji people through the negotiations for this ILUA, we are even more excited to see them take these next steps in self-determination,” he said.

“This is a great example of the benefits that can be gained for so many people through partnerships and agreements that value and recognise the contributions Traditional Owners provide.

“Congratulations to DBCA for this partnership, and thank you to the Baiyungu and Thalanyji people for your care, your work, and your knowledge that we will all be able to benefit from.

Your culture and heritage is Australia’s culture and heritage, and we should all be proud of what has been achieved.”

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

About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for the Pilbara, Mid West and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. YMAC has a representative area of over one-third of WA and represents several 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.

For all media enquiries relating to this release, please contact YMAC Communications Manager, Jane Mitchell (jmitchell@ymac.org.au or 0427 463 796), or editor@ymac.org.au .