



YMAC concerned for the future of Aboriginal heritage in Western Australia

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Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) has been advocating for reform of the WA *Aboriginal Heritage Act* (1972) for several years.

YMAC is concerned for the future of Aboriginal heritage in Western Australia as critical information is yet to be provided to the federal *Inquiry into the destruction of the 46,000 year old caves at the Juukan Gorge*.

The Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia (JSCNA) conducted a series of public hearings to inform its Inquiry in the latter half of 2020.

At the 20 November hearing, one of the witnesses was Ms Tanya Butler, Registrar of Aboriginal Sites, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH). The DPLH is responsible for management of the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee (the ACMC) which forms part of the administration of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* (1972). Ms Butler is also the Secretary to the ACMC.

Throughout the 20 November hearing Ms Butler was unable to provide answers to the questions asked by JSCNA members, as she did not have the information needed on hand. She instead requested she take the questions on notice and provide a written response to the Committee in follow up.

During the hearing the Committee Chair Hon Warren Entsch MP said there is a significant amount of additional information that they'd asked for. Information the committee described several times as "critical information".

YMAC is shocked that a response to these questions from the DPLH remains outstanding several months after the hearing.

"This is really important information that the ACMC and the Department holds on behalf of Aboriginal people. We are shocked that they haven't been able to respond to the Committee's questions asked of them, in November last year," YMAC Co-chairs Peter Windie and Natalie Parker said.

"It raises a lot of concerns about whether our heritage is being treated seriously in Western Australia.

"The questions that were asked by the Committee and the information that's required to be presented is really important. Without it there is no transparency. If the DPLH is withholding this information, it prevents Traditional Owners from being able to influence legislation to make certain that Aboriginal heritage is being treated in a sustainable and transparent way as we see with the treatment of European colonial heritage.

We need this information out there, so that it can be considered in light of the proposed new heritage legislation, and the important changes that need to happen to this and other laws such as the Mining Act."



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



All quotes to be attributed to Mr Peter Windie and Ms Natalie Parker, Co-chairs Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation.

About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) for what are described as the Pilbara (Marlpa) and Geraldton (Yamatji) regions of Western Australia. YMAC is run by an Aboriginal Board of Directors, representing several native title groups, each of whom has their own language, culture, traditions and protocols. YMAC provides a range of services, including native title claim and future act representation, heritage services, executive office, community and economic development assistance, and natural resource management support.

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