



First Nations knowledge, culture and practice highlighted in joint management forum

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Image caption: YMAC Land and Sea Management Program Manager Dr José Kalpers and Dr Bill Kruse from Pew Charitable Trusts deliver a presentation.

For the first time in 10 years – at a state or national level – Traditional Owners and other land and sea management experts came together to share their knowledge regarding joint management this week.

Joint management is a form of partnership between Traditional Owners and protected area authorities where both parties make shared decisions for the governance and management of national parks or other legislated conservation reserves.

The forum was a chance to discuss highlights and challenges in the sector while exploring possible future opportunities and directions.

In WA, there are currently 16 joint management agreements in place with WA's Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), which equates to 5.25 million hectares and 46 parks and reserves jointly managed through the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* – an increase of 89 per cent on 2020 figures.

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) presented the free two-day online forum, aimed at Western Australian Traditional Owners and their supporting organisations, in response to requests for increased information-sharing and coordination in relation to joint management.

The event included presentations from career experts such as YMAC Land and Sea Management Program Manager Dr José Kalpers, Dr Bill Kruse from Pew Charitable Trusts and Charles Darwin University's Dr Dermot Smyth, as well as the DBCA.

Individual joint management journeys and observations from the Pilbara's Nyangumarta Warrarn Aboriginal Corporation, Kimberley's Nyamba Buru Yawuru Aboriginal Corporation, Western Desert's Tarlka Matuwa Piarku Aboriginal Corporation – Mantjiljarra Yulparirra and the South Coast's Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation provided an opportunity to share knowledge and insights about the WA experience.

Queensland's Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation and Victoria's Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation shared details about joint management in other states, along with joint management expert Peter Donohoe who spoke about the Northern Territory.

Alongside various success stories, priority issues raised during the forum included:



- The need for enhanced cooperation between various state government agencies, as well as state and federal governments.
- More diversified, flexible and responsive approaches.
- The importance of developing whole-of-Country cultural management plans* or similar land and sea management strategies before any joint management negotiations, agreements or implementation.
- Further development of an Indigenous “community of practice” for those working in land and sea management.

YMAC CEO Simon Hawkins said the aim of the forum was to facilitate a peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, which he felt had been successfully achieved following the event.

“It was clear through the two days of discussion that there is a critical need for more forums like this with platforms to connect Traditional Owners and other land and sea management experts wanting to learn from one another,” he said.

“While it is apparent there are still many ongoing and outstanding challenges, the forum also provided a wealth of examples relating to the potential benefits and outcomes that can be achieved through good joint management planning and practice.

“Continuing these important conversations will be vital to the future growth and development of best practice in joint management, both within Western Australia and also nationwide.”

Following the forum, presentations and discussions will inform an “outcomes report” developed by YMAC, to be shared more broadly (including with government) when finalised.

The aim of the document will be to help influence improvements in the sector, including best practice guidelines, policies and practical approaches.

Video recordings of the various presentations and other materials from the forum will also be made available at YMAC’s website ymac.org.au .

* Overarching, long-term visions, developed by Traditional Owner groups that set out clear goals, priorities, and principles of engagement and measures of success in caring for Country.

ENDS

All quotes to be attributed to Simon Hawkins, Chief Executive Officer, Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Pronunciation guide:

Yamatji – Yam-aht-gee

Marlpa – Marl-pah

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, economic development assistance, and natural resource management support.

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