

2023 Yule River Call to Action



Systemic Reform
Education
Health
Housing
Wellbeing
Community Safety

*We come to Yule River every year to talk about
OUR issues and BE the Pilbara voice.*

*This place holds significance as it has always been a gathering
place for many families across the Pilbara.*

*Our people have always been strong when coming together, back in 1946
our people came together and stood as one with, one voice to fight for
our rights. Many of Elders here today have played here as children, ran
around the river bed as their Elders discussed business. Here we are
today, acknowledging their legacy and walking in their footsteps.*

*In the words of Mrs Eaton, “We’ve been doing this for a long time, didn’t
work before so we need to do this differently, we should be telling
government differently, we must respect this place, let’s do this for our
people of the Pilbara and let’s do this for the old people”.*

*As mentioned in the Women’s group on Day 1, “Closing the Gap.... The
Gap is getting bigger than the Yule River!”*

*We are here to call on you, the government to hear our voices and
answer our Call to Action.*

We need Action, Leadership and Unity.

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1. Introduction

The introduction to the Call to Action was presented on Days 1 and 2 of the 2023 Yule River meeting by Mr Ashley Councillor, Banjima Traditional Owner with family connections to the Nyiyaparli, Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi, Naaguja and Bibbulmun people.

Government has a responsibility to fulfill commitments to meet requirements set out in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the WA State Government Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

If we work genuinely together to support Aboriginal peoples of the Pilbara to address each of these individual areas - and with a place-based approach to solutions – this will result in a more empowered and sustainable future for all.

In presenting this **Call to Action**, we want to be clear that we, the Aboriginal people of the Pilbara have the ability, the commitment and the answers to the many issues that are impacting our people and our communities.

We present to you our call to action to put this into practice in a real, community-driven and self-determining way that can be measured, and if committed to **will make a difference and improve outcomes**.

We call on all levels of government, community organisations, and industry to genuinely work with us; listen to us; and to not just commit to systemic and structural reform, but to make it happen.

Our Calls to Action address the following priorities:

1. Systemic Reform
2. Education
3. Health
4. Housing
5. Wellbeing
6. Community Safety

They have been linked in this document to the following government policy frameworks:

- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (CtG)
- WA State Government Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy (AES)
- The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

The UNDRIP sets out clear standards of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect to recognise and improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Specifically, Article 21 states:

- (1) *Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.*
- (2) *States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.*

We invite government agencies, community organisations, and the Pilbara business community to work with us to improve systemic barriers impacting on the system being able to achieve the outcomes we need to make things better.

We all know that there are several great programs running across the Pilbara run by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), and community-led organisations achieving strong outcomes, and that there are many that could do even more with improved support. Improved support must include supporting those already achieving success.

Extending, broadening, or increasing support to these programs is a very tangible and common-sense way to address most of the issues identified. Other issues will need to have solutions co-designed and supported by all stakeholders, including community members.

As a guiding principle, there is a need for the establishment and maintenance of regional and local guidance from community reference groups, in addition to Elders groups, to inform and co-design service delivery, and help drive these local solutions.

When reviewing and responding to this document, we need the government to know and consider the following:

- Firstly, we may not know about certain programs that are already running; or we can't properly access it.
- Are you asking US if programs and services are working?
- Are Pilbara Aboriginal people co-developing or contributing to the development of the services or programs?
- Is it properly funded or supported to ensure genuine impact?
- Are your staff fully empowered to make the changes needed on-the-ground, so they can be truly responsive to our community's needs?
- Are the programs and services culturally safe?
- What are the outcomes from Government-funded Aboriginal organisations?
- What interagency engagement may be required, or is it even happening?

2. Call to Action - Systemic Reform

This Call to Action was presented on Days 1 and 2 of the 2023 Yule River meeting by Mr Danny Brown, Nyamal Traditional Owner and Mr Terry Jaffrey, Palyku Traditional Owner.

If we can partner with the government to invest back into the Pilbara in all of the mentioned key regional priorities by taking a **place-based approach to develop strategies** that address each of these areas, then this will empower our community and build service systems that are culturally informed and responsive.

We anticipate this will result in vibrant proactive Aboriginal voices and increasingly improve access in these critical areas that will eventually lead to a sustainable, flourishing, empowered Aboriginal community in the Pilbara.

This is our Call to Action for Systemic Change

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
1. Enable frameworks to support community-led, place-based decision making in relation to ALL Aboriginal services including: a) Co-design being at the forefront of all planning and decision making. b) Implementing plans for mainstream services to be transitioned to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). c) Undertaking service accountability audits.	Outcomes 8 and 17	Building Aboriginal empowerment into how we work	Article 3
2. Provide tangible support to assist ACCOs to develop businesses, and to meet identified shortcomings in tendering processes. We seek more control of funding targeted to Aboriginal peoples.	Outcome 8	Investing in foundations and future	Article 20
3. Introduce a policy to deal with and stamp out 'Black-Cladding.'	Outcome 8	Walking together	
4. Government funding/tendering and selection processes for the Pilbara MUST include representatives from the Pilbara, who have connection to and an understanding of local realities.	Outcome 8	Culture at the Heart	Article 19
5. There are no effective government 'wrap-around' and holistic programs for youth - this is an area in crisis. Government department's need to come together, work with local communities to find community-led solutions.	Outcomes 7, 8 and 10	Building Aboriginal Empowerment into the way we work Investing in Foundations and Future	Article 22
6. Plan for Aboriginal people to inform and advise on structural change, ensuring they are adequately remunerated, and that consultation is undertaken in a culturally appropriate way. a) establish and maintain regional and local guidance through community reference groups - that include service-users - in addition to Elders groups, to inform service delivery and help drive local solutions.	Outcomes 8 and 17	Investing in Foundations and Future Walking together Culture at the Heart	Articles 18, 34 and 35

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
b) governments to adequately fund a coordinated approach to enable grassroots community members to contribute advice on systemic change.			
7. Create shared data sets for the Pilbara, to improve information sharing across agencies and with family members when multiple agencies are involved in supporting Aboriginal people.	Outcome 17	Strengthening Government accountability	Article 21
8. Improve <u>community</u> relationships and understanding of Police operations in the Pilbara, through actions such as increased community-engagement, improved cultural and community education for Police officers, and local reference groups for place-based responses.	Outcome 17	Walking together – Eliminating racism and promoting respect for Aboriginal People	Article 19
9. Provide more opportunities to our community members to learn and access training on good governance.	Outcome 17	Investing in foundations and futures Investing in building strengths, prevention and earlier intervention.	Article 20
10. Work with us to identify to help us understand and work effectively with the different systems of law we are required to deal with – State and Federal Law, native title, Prescribed Bodies Corporate – through actions such as community education programs.	Outcome 17	Investing in foundations and futures Investing in building strengths, prevention and earlier intervention.	Articles 26, 27, 28 and 32
11. We seek funding for a Pilbara Hub (physical building) and the establishment of a leadership group, designed by our people and well-resourced so that we can work with community and government to make this Call to Action a reality	Outcomes 8 and 17	Investing in foundations and futures - Investing in building strengths, prevention and earlier intervention. Building Aboriginal Empowerment into how we work - supporting Aboriginal led solutions	Articles 3, 4, 18, 21 and 23

3. Call to Action - Education

This Call to Action was presented on Days 1 and 2 of the 2023 Yule River meeting by Mr Henry Lockyer, Banjima and Ngarluma Traditional Owner.

All young people and children should have the opportunity to be supported at school and that includes involving the parents, family, community, and Elders in teaching, learning and culture.

We want to make sure that young people and children learn to read, write, and solve problems at school.

With families being empowered and encouraged to support their children's education at home and at school, our communities will benefit from children who are engaged in learning.

Helping young people to get ready for employment; helping parents prepare children for school; engaging other essential services with schools; and having local education hostels and on-Country boarding will result in children and young people wanting to go to school and learn and be successful.

Culture has always been seen as something that holds us back in succeeding in education, but it should really be pushing us forward.

Classrooms and curriculum should be designed with culture in mind and for the best ways for our kids to learn and succeed – 'one size fits all' does not work.

This is our Call to Action to improve Education outcomes.

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
1. Review and properly resource individual support for students to enable more young people to complete Year 12: a) Engage other essential services with schools such as child psychologists or children with special needs. b) Employ dedicated staff to proactively support students to stay at school and engage in learning (for example young mums supported to bring baby to school). c) Increase the focus on the development of person-centred plans for students at educational risk (SAER).	Outcomes 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7	Investing in foundations and future (primary and preventative)	Articles 11, 12 and 13
2. Better involve parents, family, community, and Elders in teaching and learning and embed culture in the curriculum. For example, deliver more cultural programs in schools, including the ability to have Men and Elders teaching culture.	Outcome 5		
3. Review and improve programs to better help young people get ready for employment, and general preparation for navigating life and responsibilities following school.	Outcomes 6 and 7		
4. Improve or create new services so that parents can better prepare their children for school, including lunch support and breakfast clubs.	Outcomes 3 and 4		

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
5. Commit to providing <u>local</u> education hostels and on-Country boarding	Outcomes 3 and 4		
6. Introduce screening for learning difficulties in Kindergarten or at least before Year 1 for all Aboriginal students.	Outcomes 3 and 4		
7. Fund the return and support of Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) Committees.	Outcome 5	Investing in Foundations and Futures Walking together – Truth Telling and Investing in Prevention and Earlier Intervention	Articles 22 and 24
8. Increase / expand the footprint of the Target 120 program.	Outcome 10		
9. Provide existing Aboriginal Islander Education Officers (AIEOs) with additional training to enable them to holistically support families and link them with other services if it is warranted. Train the AEIOs to go on to become teachers.	Outcomes 5 and 6		
10. Work with parents and students together to introduce and/or support more school-based drug awareness programs; across all areas and in all Pilbara locations but targeting antenatal impact. The assessments for these programs should be independent from the schools with a specialist, working with the parent and child to assess the level of need.	Outcomes 1, 5, 6 and 14	Investing in Foundations and Futures Walking together – Truth Telling and Investing in Prevention and Earlier Intervention	Articles 22 and 24
11. Recognising that some students are not even making it to school, work with parents and children together on drug awareness programs <u>outside</u> of the school setting.	Outcomes 5,6,13 and 14		
12. The Education Department needs to play a role in addressing the issue of parental responsibility. Support parents to become more responsible through collaborating with other government departments and community to help them reach a position of strength to do so.	Outcome 14		
13. Undertake a review of the cultural safety of our schools, and ensure all education staff attend cultural awareness training, <u>delivered by Pilbara people.</u> Engage with local Aboriginal community members to undertake cultural audits of schools to ensure programs are appropriate.	Outcomes 3, 5, 6 and 16	Reshaping Government services and systems to work with culture	Article 15

4. Call to Action – Health

This Call to Action was presented on Days 1 and 2 of the 2023 Yule River meeting by Raylene Button, Kariyarra Traditional Owner.

Improved health should be a priority amongst our people.

We need to not only advocate for local health services to meet our needs, but we also need to work out healthy ways of being and living and make sure people understand their own health and navigate the health system with confidence.

We want to improve health in identified areas, for example with diabetes management and intervention and allow our community to take control of their own health journey.

We want to be able to get access to good health care when and how we need it.

This is our ***Call to Action to improve our Health outcomes.***

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
1. Review and improve local health services and health education to better meet our needs. a) Increase investment in preventative health to create culturally appropriate health education and programs the community can easily understand. b) Provide more support for early assessment and diagnoses, and consideration of on Country health services. c) Investing in these kinds of activities NOW will save lives and reduce the need for expensive treatment in the future.	Outcomes 1 and 14	Investing in foundations and futures	Article 7
2. We desperately need to address the issue of dialysis an increase in the number of dialysis chairs <u>in the Pilbara</u> . This includes an audit on existing dialysis facilities, community access to these services (including waitlisting), and for State planning to include consideration of future needs to meet local demand.	Outcome 14		
3. Government to commit to increased medical support for our old people, such as geriatricians.	Outcome 1		
4. Increase the focus and funding for programs to work with young mums and bubs.	Outcomes 2 and 4		
5. Invest in a recruitment program for health personnel to work in the Pilbara – across sectors.	Outcome 1		
6. The PATS system and patient journey needs to be urgently reviewed so that it meets the needs of people who need to travel for medical treatment, and their support/carers. It currently doesn't. Government should not expect corporations and trusts to pay for this support.	Outcomes 13 and 14		
7. Increase town-based and visiting dental services.	Outcome 14		
8. Review and audit the dedicated housing/hostel to support out-of-town patients within the Pilbara (not send	Outcomes 9 and 14		

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
them to Perth). This audit should include a review of government's delivery on previous commitments for local hostel-housing support.			
9. Improve Mental Health Services provision in the Pilbara. a) available 24/7 b) increase mental health services for our children and youth so that they don't have to go to Broome for services. c) We need dedicated Aboriginal-specific beds in the Pilbara for Mental Health patients.	Outcome 14		
10. We need support for our people to access more in-person health appointments, and less Tele-Health.	Outcomes 1 and 14		
11. We seek more accountability of health funding and if it doesn't go to an Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) or ACCO, then the non-Aboriginal organisation has to be accountable to community and transparent in their service provision and reporting.	Outcome 17		Articles 21, 23 and 24
12. Review and increase provision of services for health within the education system - school nurses, NDIS support for children, dental and ear buses to remote communities	Outcome 4		Article 21
13. Review and increase the provision of cancer support services available to Pilbara Aboriginal people.	Outcome 1	Reshaping Government services to work with culture	Article 21
14. Consult with Aboriginal community to create Sorry Rooms and culturally appropriate family rooms at Pilbara hospitals	Outcome 14		Article 18
15. Address language barriers for health patients by employing / contracting health workers who can speak Pilbara languages	Outcomes 16 and 17		Article 21
16. To support improved health outcomes, within cultural education framework standards, government must have <u>localised</u> relationships with Cultural groups – both Elders' and community reference groups – at community and regional levels.	Outcomes 1 and 14	Reshaping Government services to work with culture	Articles 18 and 19

5. Call to Action - Housing

This Call to Action was presented on Days 1 and 2 of the 2023 Yule River meeting Pat Mason, Kariyarra Traditional Owner.

We need to focus and prioritise Aboriginal people in the Pilbara having and keeping a good house to live in.

We need the government to fix up empty houses and make them available; help people get and keep tenancy; make sure there are enough houses so that people are not living in overcrowded situations; and build bigger houses for big families.

We need to advocate for Aboriginal people to design housing; and for the government to support families travelling in from remote areas to get affordable accommodation.

We want this to result in people feeling secure in their housing; reduce evictions and unpayable debt; have more space to have family to stay; and fewer health problems from overcrowding.

This is Our **Call to Action to improve our Housing outcomes.**

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
1. Conduct an urgent independent housing audit to determine empty Social Housing stock in the Pilbara. To include a review of departmental policies and procedures with respect to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum standards of housing • Maintaining housing • Addressing health concerns 	Outcomes 9, 13 and 14	Investing in Foundations and Futures and	Articles 21 and 23
2. Work with us to develop a new public housing strategy specific to the Pilbara, addressing this call to action.		Building Aboriginal empowerment into how we work	
3. Urgently address the exceedingly long wait lists and reduced housing stock experienced by Pilbara Aboriginal peoples.		Partnerships, shared decision making and engagement.	
4. Reduce overcrowding and waitlisting for housing by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fixing up empty houses and making them available. b) Building new houses that meet our needs. e.g., bigger houses for bigger families. c) Supporting collaboration between the Housing and Health Departments, so as to not send patients home to overcrowded houses 		Strengthening government accountability	
5. Invite Pilbara Aboriginal people to contribute to the design of social housing to ensure houses are 'fit for purpose.			
6. Develop programs that work with whole families that help people get and keep their tenancy, including specialist programs to train Aboriginal people to do minor repairs on their houses.			

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
7. Review and revisit the income thresholds to support people transitioning from low incomes and welfare dependency into employment so that they don't need to choose between giving up their job and losing their house.	Outcomes 8, 9 and 14		Article 21
8. Support families travelling in from remote areas to get affordable accommodation in town by ensuring short-stay options are available and affordable.			
9. Review and increase support for our people to transition from renting to owning their own property. Explore rent to buy schemes or shared equity models for home ownership and provide education to enable people to understand how to buy their own home.			
10. Develop programs or collaborate with other agencies to train up local Aboriginal people in trades associated with building and maintaining housing.			
11. Department of Communities to provide assistance to families involved with Child Protection, to support safe and appropriate housing.	Outcomes 4, 9 and 13	Partnerships, shared decision making and engagement	Articles 21, 22 and 23
12. No more closing Aboriginal communities. Allow people to live on Country, and bring back CDEP or similar programs so they can work on their Country.	Outcomes 1 and 9	Building Aboriginal Empowerment into how we work Supporting Aboriginal led solutions	Articles 21 and 23
13. Work with community to establish an aged care home in South Hedland, to replace Steven Street accommodation in Port Hedland.	Outcome 9	Building Aboriginal Empowerment into how we work Partnerships, shared decision making and engagement	Articles 21(2) and 23
14. Introduce culturally appropriate processes following the vacating of a house after the death of a family member.	Outcome 9	Supporting and promoting culture	Articles 21 and 23
15. Introduce regional and local guidance through community reference groups that can speak regularly with housing department staff to discuss programs and policies. a) Ensure Aboriginal staff within departments are also consulted in policy / program development.	Outcomes 13 and 17	Supporting and promoting culture	Articles 21 and 23

6. Call to Action – Wellbeing

This call to action was presented on Days 1 and 2 of Yule River meeting by Mrs Doris Eaton, Nyamal, Pitjakarli, and Martu Elder and Linda Dridi, Nyamal Traditional Owner with Martu connections.

Aboriginal people need support, compassion and understanding of what we have experienced and what we are experiencing.

Listening to what people of all ages need for their wellbeing and making sure that Aboriginal healers are there if we need or want them is vital to our people.

By supporting and understanding the challenges of drug and alcohol addiction, especially young people; having local place-based mental health supports run by Aboriginal organisations; having access to family system counselling; and having appropriate services when they are needed will help the healing of Aboriginal people from past trauma and it might help reduce intergenerational challenges and problems.

Aboriginal people are spiritual people. We need healing. Healed people are strong people.

This is Our **Call to Action to improve our Wellbeing outcomes.**

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
1. Actively listen to what people of all ages in our community need for their wellbeing. Talk to us.	Outcomes 1 and 14	Walking together and Investing in Foundations and Futures	Articles 22 and 24(2)
2. Make sure Aboriginal healers are there if people need or want them.			
3. Understand and better support the challenges of drug and alcohol addiction, especially for young people. For example: a) Restrict the access of volatile substances. Elders have already written letters to several suppliers in the Pilbara. b) Introduce new services/programs to address volatile substance abuse.			
4. Review and increase the number of local, place-based mental health support services run by Aboriginal organisations.			
5. Fund counselling services that support improved access to for either for 1:1 a family, or a mix of both. At the moment service contracts seem to be prescriptive and it can only be one or the other – not both. We need contracts to be less prescriptive.			
6. Provide funding for preferred service providers to have dedicated positions within their organisations to manage the wellbeing of Aboriginal staff independently.			
7. Department of Communities to adopt a culturally appropriate way of working, including involving all our Elders to do cultural plans to support the wellbeing and safety of the children in care. This should include adhering to departmental policy by immediately implementing the Aboriginal Elders Panel.	Outcome 16	Reshaping government systems to work with culture	Articles 21 and 23

7. Call to Action - Community Safety

This Call to Action was presented on Days 1 and 2 at Yule River by Maureen “MK” Kelly, Yindjibarndi and Ngarluma Elder and Ethan Tittums, Kariyarra, Palyku and Purungu man.

Community safety is a priority in our region. We need community-led solutions that will create safe places in the community for our people, including our children and young people, especially after school and at night.

We need to encourage everyone to take responsibility for safety in the community; supporting vulnerable populations.

This is our Call to Action to improve our Community Safety outcomes.

Item	Alignment with strategic policy drivers		
	CtG Outcomes	AES Strategic Elements	UNDRIP Articles
1. Government department's need to come together to work with communities to co-design place-based, wrap-around, holistic solutions and programs to improve community safety, and to support youth in crisis. a) Engage with us to better support community-led and co-designed solutions.	Outcome 17	Building Aboriginal Empowerment into how we work and Investing in Foundations and Futures with Culture at the Heart	Articles 3 and 23
2. Work with us to create consistent, safe places in the community for children and young people, especially after school and at night. (1-2 nights a week is just not enough.)	Outcomes 4 and 13		
3. Better support vulnerable populations like young mums with babies and people with disabilities and their families.			
4. Reduce anti-social behaviour by providing holistic tailored support to young people and having more at-risk youth services and programs so they have options.			
5. Hold parents and carers accountable for children's behaviour. Better support for them to do this by providing holistic, wrap-around supports.			
6. Young People should be on Country, not in prisons. We need to look at alternative ways our children and youth can heal without going to prison	Outcome 11	Investing in building strength, prevention and earlier intervention	Article 7

8. How this Call to Action was developed

The 2023 Yule River Call to Action comes from the Pilbara Aboriginal people attending the 2023 Annual on-Country Bush Meeting at the Yule River Meeting Place on Wednesday 12 and Thursday 13 July 2023.

In April 2023, Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation's Pilbara Regional Committee invited Prescribed Body Corporates (PBCs), and Aboriginal groups across the Pilbara to nominate Elders and Emerging Leaders to attend a Yule River pre-event workshop on 18 April in South Hedland.

The 35 April workshop participants represented a range of Elders and Emerging Leaders voices, viewpoints, lived experiences and industry insights. To enable full participation by attendees, it was facilitated by an experienced independent Aboriginal consultant Mandy Gadsdon, who also assisted in the preparation of this Call to Action, and in connecting the commitments sought by the community members present to Western Australian (WA) State, and Federal strategic policies.

The workshop nominated a working group at the 18 April workshop to further refine the Draft Call to Action statement prior to the On-Country Yule River meeting.

They are: Danny Brown, Raylene Button, Ashley Councillor, Linda Dridi, Doris Eaton, Terry Jaffrey, Patricia Mason, Maureen "MK" Kelly, Henry Lockyer, and Ethan Tittums.

The draft Call to Action was then presented to the broader Pilbara Aboriginal Community on Day 1 of the 2023 Yule River meeting. Further discussion on the issues and solutions happened before the meeting endorsed the Call to Action for presentation the following day to invited guests from government and community.

The feedback from the Day 1 Pilbara community members discussion has been included in this updated Call to Action.

9. About the Yule River Meetings

Meetings held at Yule River are historic, having been organised by Aboriginal people in the vast Pilbara region for decades. The dry riverbed off the North West Coastal Highway, just south of Port Hedland, is seen as a place where people from different language groups can come together to discuss common issues affecting Aboriginal communities across the region.

The meetings stemmed from the actions taken in the lead up to the 1946 Pilbara Strike, when Aboriginal people held secret meetings in remote bush locations to plan an ambitious three-year walk-off by Aboriginal pastoral workers who were living on cattle stations in conditions of virtual slavery. Pilbara Aboriginal people continued in their efforts to advocate for improved conditions and outcomes by organising bush meetings.

During the land rights era, from the late 1970s, Yule River became the focal point for such gatherings that were often attended by up to 2000 Aboriginal people from all over the Pilbara. At this time, “Old Man Parker” (born Herbert), was the Pilbara representative for the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee, the first national body elected by Aboriginal people introduced by the Whitlam Government. Mr Parker presided over these meetings on the river’s sandy banks as Aboriginal people from all over the Pilbara region gathered to talk about lands trust business, housing complaints and land rights.

Many important initiatives have come from Yule River meetings, with both concerns and solutions coming directly from Pilbara Aboriginal people; and with government expected to attend to hear and address their concerns. Through the efforts of then-YMAC Co-Chairperson, Mrs Doris Eaton (whose father was a key player in the 1946 Pilbara Strike), and the YMAC Pilbara Regional Committee, the Yule River meetings started again in 2014.

All language groups from across the region are invited to attend these meetings and share their concerns. Much like they were decades ago, gatherings at Yule River are an important opportunity for a diverse range of Aboriginal voices to be heard.

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The draft Call to Action was prepared by Ms Mandy Gadsdon, Director, Think Culture (independent facilitator of the pre-event workshop) and was finalised by YMAC in consultation with the Yule River Call to Action Working Group.

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