



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Traditional Owners celebrate Middamia Native Title Determination on Country

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Traditional Owners and their families celebrate Determination with Justice Burley and YMAC team members

Photo by: Jose Kalpers from YMAC

Yesterday the Honourable Justice Burley of the Federal Court of Australia made an on-Country determination on Middalya Station recognising the native title rights and interests for the Middamia native title claimants.

It was an emotional celebration given almost a 30 year long legal process for the Middamia families who have connections to the area of Country that sits between the Gnulli and Thudgari determination areas. The claimants and a number of their Elders who have sadly passed on, have been a part of this claim process from the beginning and have given an incredible amount of their knowledge and time towards this claim.

Traditional Owner Thomas Dodd, a Yinggarda man and the last Elder from his family on the Middamia claim was asked what the Determination meant to him. Thomas said it was a



heartfelt time, and he was proud to be there to experience the outcome of what took 30 years in the making.

“I’ve got the next generation here with me, my nephews, and nieces, which are my sons and daughters and being the only one left, I recall way back in the day when I used to come out and spend time here during my school holidays with my old people. I got the knowledge of the land and family connections which I will pass on to my next generation, so they know the connections that we got on this Country.”

Native title representative body Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) provided legal and other advice to the claim. Following the determination, YMAC’s Yamatji Regional Manager Chris Dann (representing CEO Simon Hawkins), congratulated the Middamia native title holders. She shared that the determination means that the Middamia families associated with the claim are not only recognised by the Federal Court as the Traditional Owners of the Country (within the Determination Area) but will also have certain procedural rights under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*.

“These procedural rights such as the right to be consulted, ideally from the very beginning, and the right to negotiate with regards to development in the Determination Area, is an opportunity for genuine partnerships between Traditional Owners and proponents and should be the way when conducting business of *any* kind on Country, such as mining and renewable energy projects,” she said.

The Hon. Justice Burley who presided over the Determination highlighted the claimants connection to Country.

“Members of each claimant family place connections and belonging to Middamia through parental or grandparental and bilateral affiliation, ultimately going back through the generations as descendants from a Middamia apical ancestor,” he said.

“The joint submissions provided by Counsel on both sides also recall the members of the Middamia claim group have maintained their connection to the area.”

Justice Burley further remarked on the claimant’s connections to Country.

“You teach your children about Country, you teach them about traditional ways, hunting, fishing, and cooking. And teach them about rituals that are to be observed on Country.

Your deep connection is something that you know about, and you have cherished for generations.”



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The resultant area of land is based mainly within the boundaries of Middalya pastoral station and encompasses a small area of Mia Mia and Wandagee stations, covering an area of roughly 733 km².

It is the beginning of a new phase for the relevant Middamia families as Native Title Holders, as they continue to speak for and look after Country.

About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Proudly celebrating 30th Anniversary in 2024, Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the Native Title Representative Body (NTRB), delivering native title and other services across the Pilbara, Mid West, Murchison and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. YMAC is run by a First Nations board of directors, representing several native title groups, each of whom have their own language, culture, traditions, and protocols. YMAC services include native title claim and future act representation; heritage services; executive office, community, and economic development assistance; land administration, and natural resource management support.

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