



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Community-led solutions at the heart of 2026 Yule River Bush Meeting

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(The Yule River Working Group with Kevin Michel MLA, Minister for the Pilbara Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Hon Don Punch at the 2026 On-Country Bush Meeting at the Yule River Meeting Place. Image: Sam Gibbs)

Aboriginal people from across the Pilbara have called on governments to work alongside them to create lasting change and improve access to essential services for their communities.

Held on 29 and 30 July 2026 on Kariyarra Country, the 2026 Annual On-Country Bush Meeting at the Yule River Meeting Place brought together more than 500 people from across the region, alongside ACCOs, Ministers and senior representatives from all levels of government.

On behalf of the community, Yule River Working Group members Henry Lockyer and Zoe Little presented the key priorities identified during the meeting to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Hon Don Punch, Minister for the Pilbara Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, Commissioner for Children and Young People Jacqueline McGowan-Jones and senior government representatives.

Mr Lockyer said long-term funding certainty was critical to addressing the issues raised by the community.

"Everything we discussed here yesterday and everything we discuss here each year comes back to a failure of the system. We are left in the wake of this systemic failure, and we are left to pick up the pieces," Mr Lockyer said.

"One practical change would be to take a genuinely generational approach to funding, giving our organisations the confidence, certainty and stability they need to address the complex issues our Peoples and Communities continue to face."



Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Hon Don Punch acknowledged the concerns raised by community members and reaffirmed his commitment to working alongside Pilbara Aboriginal communities to progress the priorities identified at the meeting.

“Again, I give a commitment that I will be back again formally in six months to review our progress on the outcomes from this meeting, said Hon Don Punch.

“I also give a commitment that if you need me to follow up on a matter, you can contact me and I will respond to that and I will give the answer that I can give.”

Community members also raised issues including housing, education, traditional language preservation and water quality during a Q&A session with senior government representatives.

Mrs Doris Eaton, YMAC Deputy Co-Chairperson, Pilbara Region – Board of Directors, encouraged all Aboriginal people from across the Pilbara to come together as one.

“I thank YMAC for bringing us to Yule River, and I thank the Yule River Working Group. We work so hard to get where we are, but we need your support,” said Mrs Eaton.

“When we’re all standing together, we’ll achieve something. We can’t do this as individual families. We’re all fighting for one cause.”

The meeting also recognised the 80th anniversary of the Pilbara Strike, with the Yule River Working Group paying tribute to those who led the historic movement. A record 31 information stalls took part in this year’s event, providing opportunities for information sharing and community engagement.

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) coordinates the Yule River Bush Meeting under the direction of its Pilbara Regional Committee and in consultation with the Yule River Working Group.

YMAC extends its appreciation to the Town of Port Hedland, the Pilbara Development Commission, and Lotterywest for their support of this year’s event.

Find out more on the YMAC website at ymac.org.au/events/yule-river.

About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Established in 1994, 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. As an Aboriginal corporation, 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, compensation and future act representation; heritage services; executive office, community, and economic development assistance; land administration, and natural resource management support.

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