



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Yamatji community call on government to establish local First Nations hubs

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MAOA Co-Chairs Jamie Strickland and Chloe Collard with WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon. Don Punch MLA (image: Heather Dowling)

The Yamatji First Nations community have come together to call on all levels of government to join with them on a new First Nations led approach to delivering on the *2025 Yamatji On-Country Call to Action* (Call to Action).

Community members have made clear their desire to see three dedicated, agenda-free spaces built for the community – one each for Men, Women and Youth. These spaces would be purposefully distinct – but built on one shared foundation.

The spaces would be places that could support healing, connections, belonging and navigation for Aboriginal people in the region, without recreating the institutional pressures that exist elsewhere.

The call to both the State and Commonwealth governments is for both investment in capital works to establish these three fit-for-purpose and locally designed community hubs, as well as long-term resourcing over the next five years that would give community the ability to establish these spaces without imposing a specific service delivery agenda.



Community representatives shared the proposal on Day Two of this year's Yamatji on Country with Senator Sue Lines, WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs the Hon. Don Punch, Member for Geraldton Kirrilee Warr MLA, and Commissioner for Children and Young People Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, who joined the meeting and spoke in response to community presentations and the Call to Action.

Held on Southern Yamatji Country on Wednesday, 23 and Thursday, 24 September 2026 at the Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation, this year's event saw hundreds of community members join together from across the region to voice the needs, wants and aspirations of their communities.

Co-Chairs of the Midwest Aboriginal Organisations Alliance (MAOA), Jamie Strickland and Chloe Collard, explained these holistic community spaces would be First Nations-led.

Ms Collard shared that priorities for women in the region included having a space for generational healing, truth-telling, and the strengthening of culture.

"It is about sisterhood, bringing collective strength, and recognising and responding to the intergenerational trauma that is still being carried forward in our families and communities," Ms Collard said.

For men, Mr Strickland shared this space could include drug and alcohol services, preventative support in the family and domestic violence space, and on-Country programs for men, including young men.

"What we are asking for today is a commitment to provide funding towards this project," said Mr Strickland.

"We are also asking for a commitment that you will come back to our community in six months, so that we can better work through some of our ideas and – as a community – develop some specifics around exactly what these spaces need to look like.

"What we know is that we need these spaces. We know they need to be Aboriginal-led and controlled, and we know they need to be run by our community for our community. Consultation is non-negotiable."

Community members also made clear their urgent concerns for the Carnarvon community.

Gail Bellotti spoke passionately about her concerns for the Carnarvon community, saying, "Our nannas are at our wits end. Drugs and crime are taking over our town and invading the homes of our families. Our nannas are caring for their grandchildren and trying to keep their children alive".

"They are carrying grief, trauma, poverty, housing stress and child safety fears while being sent from agency to agency with no clear help".



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“I stand here today and call on the WA Ombudsman’s office to commence a full, whole-of government investigation into the systemic failure that is besieging Carnarvon”.

“It must examine racism, unsafe decision-making, housing failure, child protection practice, policing responses, justice pathways, service gaps and the absence of accountable leadership.”

A key highlight of Yamatji on-Country each year is the involvement of First Nations young people from across the region. The youth program offers opportunity for growth and leadership, as well as connection with Elders and other First Nations leaders in the region.

In the lead-up to this year’s event, high school students from the across the region have been working together on an exciting Elders Film Project, announced at last year’s Yamatji on-Country.

Workshops have been held in Geraldton, Mullewa, Exmouth and Carnarvon. The project will produce a series of films capturing the voices, stories and wisdom of Elders, filmed and directed on-Country by local students.

These young people attended this year’s meeting and gave community members and government representatives an update on the work they have been doing, and YMAC is looking forward to presenting the final films early next year.

YMAC Co-Chair Mr Peter Windie said this year’s Yamatji on-Country once again demonstrated the strength of community-led conversations and decision-making.

“It was great to see so many people come together to share their ideas, experiences and aspirations for our region. The discussions over the two days highlighted the importance of community having a strong voice in shaping our future,” Mr Windie said.

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About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

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.
