

**Kimberley Land Council**

**MEDIA STATEMENT 15/06/2021**

**Kimberley Land Council to visit Parliament House to call on McGowan Government to stand up for Aboriginal people**

The Kimberley Land Council (KLC) has expressed profound disappointment in the McGowan Government’s failure to recognise the right Aboriginal people have to protect their own cultural heritage.

The Government has so far refused to reconsider redrafting significant flaws in proposed Aboriginal Cultural Heritage legislation, which will place control of critical decision making about Aboriginal heritage in the hands of mining companies.

The proposed legislation will allow mining companies and land users to avoid engaging with Traditional Owners and come up with their own determination on whether areas contain culturally significant Aboriginal sites.

KLC Chair Anthony Watson said: “It is extremely disappointing the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Stephen Dawson is behaving like he is the Minister for mining companies. We need a Minister who stands up for Aboriginal people and respects their right to protect their culture and heritage.”

Mr Watson, along with other leaders from the KLC, will visit the steps of WA Parliament House today to present a statement to Mr Dawson. The statement will call on the Minister to convene a forum of representatives from government, industry, native title groups and native title representative bodies from across Western Australia to ensure any new legislation is best practice and fit for purpose.

“The destruction of the 46,000-year-old caves at Juukan Gorge is a reminder that mining companies should not be the protectors of Aboriginal cultural heritage. They should be the last people who can decide on Aboriginal culture and heritage.”

“The solution is for all of us to sit around the table and working out workable piece of legislation that respects the world’s oldest surviving culture,” Mr Watson said.

At the visit to Parliament House, the KLC will voice its protest over the WA Government’s decision not to prosecute the mining company Kimberley Granite Holdings over the significant and irreversible damage caused to the culturally significant Garnkiny and Jawaren sites in the East Kimberley, which have caused deep distress to the Malarngowem Traditional Owners.

The Council will also reiterate its opposition to plans by the State Government to take hundreds of gigalitres of water from the Fitzroy River, which will threaten culturally important sites and the local ecosystem.

The former KLC Chair Frank Davey, a Bardi Traditional Owner, will also host a corroboree at front of Parliament House to ward off evil spirits.

**-ENDS-**

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