



MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19th August 2021

The KLC continues to urge the Minister to put Traditional Owners in control of decisions about their own cultural heritage.

The Kimberley Land Council has reiterated its calls for Traditional Owners to be put front and centre in decisions about their cultural heritage, after being briefed on the draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in Perth yesterday.

KLC Chair Anthony Watson says it is a critical time for West Australia to get the legislation around Aboriginal Cultural Heritage right.

“Our greatest concern is that we still don’t know what legislation we will eventually end up with to protect our heritage. We have been told there has been movement in the development of the Bill, but so far the updates we have seen just signal that movement is favouring industry.”

“We’re concerned the goal posts keep moving. For example, in the previous draft bill Traditional Owners had a right of appeal against the minister’s decision to approve a Cultural Heritage Management Plan, that has since been removed,” said Mr Watson.

“We are asking for the Government to trust Traditional Owners. In order for our heritage to be protected, we must be in control about decisions regarding our cultural heritage. The draft bill does not afford us these rights yet.”

“The Government has the unique opportunity to be world leaders in demonstrating heritage protection and development can co-exist and result in a flourishing economy.”

Mr Watson said the Government still has the opportunity to get these laws right.

“There needs to be greater transparency, and we must be brought into the room with industry and Government to negotiate the final draft bill,” said Mr Watson.

“The days where laws are passed that prioritise industry over the rights of Aboriginal people must end with the McGowan Government.”

“The latest briefing document detailing the updates made to the draft Bill signals a reduction in the rights of Traditional Owners from the draft that was shown to us in September last year. It is disappointing as we know our concerns have not been acknowledged.”

Minister Stephen Dawson gave no indication of when the full draft Bill would be released to Aboriginal stakeholders, or when it would be presented to State Parliament.

Kimberley Traditional Owners march to Parliament to highlight concerns around heritage protection

Kimberley Traditional Owners will join KLC leaders in a march to WA Parliament today, calling on the McGowan Government to take a once in a lifetime opportunity to get the laws around protecting Aboriginal Cultural heritage right.

KLC Chair Anthony Watson said it is a critical time to protect Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in WA against further destruction.

“The Martuwarra Fitzroy River in the Kimberley is just one of many sites around the state that are under threat. We don’t want the Martuwarra Fitzroy River to be the next Juukan Gorge.”

Mr Watson said we must ensure the new laws guarantee the protection of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage so it is preserved for future generations.

“Standing in front of parliament today, we will be asking for our voices to be at the front and centre of legislation that concerns our cultural heritage.”

Mr Watson said the Kimberley Land Council will present ‘The Heritage Statement’ to Premier McGowan on the steps of Parliament today.

“We have travelled down to Perth from the Kimberley to invite the Government to work with us to ensure our heritage, our irreplaceable connection to the past, is protected for future generations.”

Details for heritage march:

- 10.30am Meet at lawns on Fraser Avenue opposite the State War Memorial at Kings Park
- 11.30am March from Kings Park (Fraser Avenue lawn opposite the war memorial) to Parliament
- 12pm Arrive at Parliament – speeches, dance, formalities commence
- 1pm Premier McGowan invited to receive ‘Heritage Statement’ presented by Kimberley Land Council

Media contact:

Gabrielle Timmins, Media Coordinator
M: 0408 436 987 E: gabrielle.timmins@klc.org.au

P.O. BOX 2145
BROOME WA 6725
Ph: (08) 9194 0100
www.klc.org.au