



## Kimberley Land Council

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**27/05/2021**

### **KLC calls on WA Government to redraft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage legislation**

The Kimberley Land Council (KLC) has called on the Western Australian Government to go back to the drawing board on its proposed Aboriginal Cultural Heritage legislation, to ensure Aboriginal people have the right to protect their cultural heritage.

“The proposed legislation is deeply flawed and a backwards step as it places control over critical decision making about Aboriginal cultural heritage in the hands of mining companies and other land users,” said KLC Chairman Anthony Watson.

“The State Government needs to recognise that Traditional Owners have a right to protect their cultural heritage and not bowing to the interests of the big mining companies. Industry and Traditional Owners in the Kimberley have been working together in this way for over twenty years and the Government needs to bring its thinking forward to catch up.”

“The destruction of the 46,000 year old caves at Juukan Gorge showed the current legislation is inadequate in protecting the world’s oldest surviving culture. It also showed that any new laws that do not allow Aboriginal people to determine how their cultural heritage should be protected will no longer be accepted by the investment and broader community.”

The KLC has requested the WA Aboriginal Affairs Minister Stephen Dawson convene a forum of representatives from government, industry, native title groups and native title representative bodies from across the State to ensure any laws which replace the current Aboriginal Heritage Act are best practice and fit for purpose.

“The State Government has a once in a generation opportunity to get the laws for the protection and recognition of Aboriginal cultural heritage right,” Mr Watson said.

The KLC has warned the proposed legislation’s Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Directory is primarily a device for proponents to avoid engaging directly with native title holders about their cultural heritage, and therefore undermines Aboriginal peoples’ interest in, control over, and ability to make informed decisions about their cultural heritage.

The draft legislation also flouts international standards on cultural heritage protection, including the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) which states indigenous people around the world have the right to protect their cultural heritage.

**Ends.**

**Media contact**

Gabrielle Timmins, Media Coordinator. M: 0408 436 987 E: [gabrielle.timmins@klc.org.au](mailto:gabrielle.timmins@klc.org.au)