



## MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **“History will repeat itself”: Juukan Gorge Inquiry reinforces concerns over WA’s proposed heritage laws**

The Kimberley Land Council (KLC) has supported findings from the Juukan Gorge Inquiry but warns that history will repeat itself if Western Australia’s proposed heritage laws continue to allow for destruction of Aboriginal heritage.

The report of the Commonwealth Parliamentary inquiry released on Monday says Australia must do more to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage by overhauling “grossly inadequate laws and giving traditional owners the right to withhold consent to the destruction of cultural heritage on their country”.

The KLC is calling on Premier McGowan to show Traditional Owners the latest version of the draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, which the Premier has indicated will be tabled to Parliament in coming months.

KLC CEO, Tyrone Garstone, said the lack of transparency around the latest version of the draft bill is concerning and inconsistent with the McGowan Government’s promise that the new laws will strengthen the protection of heritage sites.

“Our greatest concern is that we still don’t know what legislation we will end up with, and we are not confident the proposed legislation gives Aboriginal people the right to withhold consent over damage to or destruction of cultural heritage on their country” Mr Garstone said.

“The last time the draft bill was made available was over a year ago, and we know there have been more than a hundred of amendments made since, none of which we have seen.”

Mr Garstone welcomed findings from the Parliamentary committee’s report, including recommendations that the Commonwealth should be able to override decisions made under “inadequate” state or territory laws that could destroy heritage sites.

“The State Government is too close to industry and too dependent on royalties to be objective and transparent when it comes to matters concerning Aboriginal heritage,” Mr Garstone said.

“In order to move forward, the Western Australian Government must abolish all powers that authorise damage to cultural heritage sites without the consent of Traditional Owners.”

The KLC is calling for a transparent public process of negotiations on the draft bill.

“Aboriginal groups and industry should be allowed to work together on the development of this bill in the same room, and the draft bill must be made available before it is introduced into Parliament”.

ENDS.

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