



Kimberley Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

November 20, 2014

Speaking with one voice: WA Aboriginal coalition takes stand at Parliament against Heritage Act changes.

A strong and united Aboriginal coalition converged on the steps of Parliament today to make it clear to the WA Government that Aboriginal Heritage Act amendments must be changed.

The group of 70 Traditional Owners travelled from the Kimberley, Western Desert, Yamatji (Midwest & Murchison-Gascoyne) and South West to show the government that Aboriginal heritage and culture in WA was alive and strong and could not be destroyed.

Kimberley Land Council chairman Anthony Watson said proposed changes to the WA Aboriginal Heritage Act were discriminatory and completely disregarded Aboriginal people and their right to care for their heritage.

“The proposed changes lock Aboriginal people out of the process and put the decision-making power into the hands of a government bureaucrat, who will have the final say on the destruction of sites and our cultural heritage,” he said.

Mr Watson said eight Kimberley cultural advisers joined fellow countrymen from across the state to present Nationals MP Brendon Grylls and Labor MP Ben Wyatt with a petition signed by more than 1600 people and to meet with Indigenous Affairs Minister Peter Collier.

“We will not let the government trample on our cultural heritage. We met with government ministers face-to-face today, so we could explain the massive detrimental and enduring impacts the proposed changes will have on our cultural heritage,” he said.

“Our cultural heritage dates back 50,000 years and is among the oldest in the world. It is essential Traditional Owners are involved in the management of Aboriginal heritage which should be treated with the same level of protection as European heritage.

“Today we stood together, united and strong as one Aboriginal voice. We hope Minister Collier listened to what we had to say and takes the necessary steps needed to abandon the amendments. We want to start with a clean state to produce legislation that meaningfully includes Aboriginal people and values our cultural heritage.”

Mr Watson said he also used the meeting with Minister Collier as an opportunity to discuss the WA Government’s plan to close Aboriginal communities.

“Aboriginal people in WA are under attack and the closure of Aboriginal communities is another example of the State Government trying to undermine our rights,” he said.

“I made it clear today that closing communities will have disastrous flow-on affects that will set our people back generations. I invited Minister Collier and the Premier to come to the Kimberley and meet with us, so we can show first-hand the positives that come from community living.”

ENDS