



Yamatji Marlpa

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

Banjima People celebrate recognition following Federal Court battle

MEDIA RELEASE: 14 March 2014

Perth: On 11th March 2014, the Federal Court recognised the native title rights of the Banjima People at their on-country determination held in Karijini National Park in the Central Pilbara.

The Banjima People first lodged their native title claim in 1998 and have been in litigation with the WA State Government since 2011 after being unable to move forward with a negotiated outcome.

Banjima country extends west towards Tom Price, and east towards the town of Newman. It includes areas around Karijini National Park and the asbestos mining town of Wittenoom. The area is home to many sacred sites including ancient stone engravings and the gorges, including Wittenoom Gorge, have spiritual significance, forming part of the Banjima Peoples' cultural storylines.

Maitland Parker, Banjima elder, said "We have fought for this for a long time, so to be recognised as traditional owners is very rewarding. Our elders have taught us all of the things we needed to get our determination. They have taught us our law, language and culture, which we will pass on our young people."

Simon Hawkins, CEO for Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation said it was a momentous occasion for the Banjima people. He said, "After a 15 year wait and the stress of rigorous court proceedings, the Banjima people have achieved formal recognition of their culture and traditions. It is regrettable that the Barnett Government decided to take this matter to trial."

Justice Barker said it was significant for the court to be sitting in Karijini National Park on Banjima country. He said "For many Banjima People the concluding of the proceeding before the court has been a long time in the coming." He also said "Regrettably a number of senior members of the Banjima claim group have not lived to see the making of the Banjima determination today but I am sure the memory of these elders who have passed away and their spirit is very much with all Banjima People present here today."

For interviews please contact:

Melissa Lucioli | Communications Specialist
P 08 9268 7014 | M 0458 010 483 | mlucioli@ymac.org.au

About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for native title claims in the Pilbara, Murchison and Gascoyne areas of Western Australia. The organisation has a representative area of almost one million square kilometres and represents over 23 native title claims, all with their own language, culture and traditions.

YMAC is a not-for-profit organisation, run by an Aboriginal Board and provides a range of services to its members including claim and future-act representation, heritage protection services, community and economic development and natural resource management.
