



Robe River Kuruma community celebrates Native Title win

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Photo: Robe River Kuruma native title holders celebrate native title recognition with Justice Rangiah

The Robe River Kuruma community celebrates the recognition of their second determination of native title (Part B determination). The Federal Court Hearing was held on-Country at Pannawonica Hill, Robe River on Thursday 26 April 2018. The celebration was facilitated by Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC), the Native Title Representative Body for the Pilbara Region, and Kuruma Marthudunera Aboriginal Corporation (KMAC), the Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC).

The first determination of native title, known as Part A Determination, was made by the Federal Court in November 2016. The Part A Determination covers approximately 4,109 square kilometres of land.

The Part B determination area includes the middle Robe, the Bungaroo Valley and the Buckland Ranges. The determination area lies in the Shire of Ashburton in Western Australia's Pilbara region, with Part B covering approximately 5,720 square kilometres.

The Part B determination means that the Robe River Kuruma people's own system of laws and customs in relation to land and ownership of land has been recognised by Australian law. As a result of this historic outcome, the Robe River Kuruma people will continue to be consulted about developments on their land.

Justice Rangiah said, "today the Federal Court of Australia is not giving you this land. The Federal Court is recognising what you have always known to be true. That you are the owners of this land. This is an occasion to celebrate and look to the future."

Sara Slattery, Traditional Owner and Chair of Kuruma Marthudunera Aboriginal Corporation said "it's a beautiful day for Kuruma people, a long time coming - over 26 years. A big thank you to our people who have passed, it's because of them that we're here today celebrating native title recognition."

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) CEO Simon Hawkins thanked the Federal Court for their support for an on-Country hearing. Mr Hawkins said today's outcome was an historic milestone.

"After a 21 year legal process, the Robe River Kuruma people have successfully secured recognition of their traditional rights and interests on their country, and today marks the beginning of a new phase for the Robe River Kuruma people as native title holders in the Part B area", he said.

The determination will recognise that Robe River Kuruma have exclusive rights within four areas of unallocated crown land where there were no mining tenements or reserves when one of the Kuruma Marthudunera or Robe River Kuruma claims were first lodged in 1996 and 2016 respectively.

Senator Patrick Dodson MP, Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, said "I congratulate you on what you have achieved. You've done a marvellous job. It's a great honour to be on your country and see the Federal Court come to your country to recognise in Western Law that this is your land."

The Robe River Kuruma word for the Robe River is Jajiwara, and it's from this river that they draw their cultural identity. The Jajiwara is home to many sacred sites including ceremonial places, permanent pools and various creeks that feed in to it. The Part B determination area consists of a unique and significant cultural landscape forming part of the Robe River Kuruma people's cultural connection to their land.

YMAC CEO Simon Hawkins said "The Robe River Kuruma community has been patient and generous with their knowledge throughout this journey and there were many stakeholders involved in the native title process that were instrumental to achieving this successful outcome. This determination is testament to what can be achieved when the State, community and Native Title Representative Bodies all work together. Congratulations everyone."

All quotes from Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation must be attributed to Mr Simon Hawkins, CEO Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation.

About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for the Pilbara, Murchison, Mid-West and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. YMAC has a representative area of over one-third of WA and represents over 24 native title claims, all with their own language, culture and traditions. YMAC is a not-for-profit organisation run by an Aboriginal Board of Directors 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.

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