



5th Annual On-Country Bush Meeting at Yule River next week

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The 5th Annual On-Country Bush Meeting at Yule River on 11 and 12 July will once again bring together Traditional Owners from across Western Australia to discuss the issues that affect them and their families.

Day One supports Traditional Owners in their cultural decision-making to develop solution-based responses to issues, and will conclude with a celebration of custom and culture including traditional singing and dancing performed by a variety of Aboriginal community groups. Senator Nigel Scullion, Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, has registered his attendance on Day 1.

Day Two welcomes decision-makers and influencers to witness the resolutions passed by the community, with Federal Senators Pat Dodson and Sue Lines registering their attendance, as well as State Government Ministers Ben Wyatt (Aboriginal Affairs) and Alannah MacTiernan (Regional Development), and member for Pilbara Kevin Michel, member for Mining and Pastoral Region Robin Chapple, and Member for Warren Blackwood Terry Redman (Nationals spokesperson for Aboriginal Affairs).

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) Chief Executive Simon Hawkins said Yule River highlighted the positive accomplishments and contributions being made by Traditional Owners across the State, with last year's event attracting more than 400 people.

"This is a forum for Traditional Owners, politicians, and bureaucrats to meet, to discuss key issues," Mr Hawkins said.

"The event represents a significant opportunity for revitalising trust, relationship-building and providing a platform for authentic engagement, and YMAC is proud to facilitate the annual meeting for the benefit of Traditional Owners across the State."

At the 2017 Yule River meeting, Traditional Owners passed three resolutions:

- The historic formation of an Independent Representative Group to give advice to governments on behalf of Aboriginal Pilbara people.
- The establishment of key issues: language preservation; improve education in the Pilbara; improve health services – mental, renal and men's health; support of a treaty with the State Government; improved housing services for Aboriginal Pilbara people; oppose the Cashless Welfare Card; and Aboriginal heritage protection.
- Support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, Constitutional Recognition and Federal Government Treaty.

"The 2018 meeting will look at the progress of these resolutions, and the need for

others," Mr Hawkins said.

"Other issues on the agenda include the expiry of the Commonwealth and State Governments' National Partnership Agreement on Remote Housing on 30 June 2018 which has left residents of remote communities across WA facing deep uncertainty over their future.

"There is also outstanding the 2016 Yule River call for an independent inquiry into the State Government's handling of Aboriginal heritage sites across the Pilbara."

YMAC will also welcome the Hedland Aboriginal Strong Leaders (HASL) who are proud to be presenting the 2018 Port Hedland NAIDOC Awards at 1pm on Day Two. Raylene Button, HASL Co-chair, has thanked the Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation and Pilbara Development Commission for their support, with 15 awards to be presented including Elders of the Year, Artists of the Year, and Reconciliation awards.

MEDIA ATTENDANCE: All members of the media are invited to attend the Yule River meeting from 2pm on Day One - Wednesday 11 July 2018, including the opportunity to camp overnight, and attend 9.30am – 4pm Day Two - Thursday 12 July 2018.

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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. For more information please visit ymac.org.au

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – YULE RIVER MEETINGS

Meetings held at Yule River are historic, and have been organised by Aboriginal people in the vast Pilbara region for decades. The dry river bed off the North West Coastal Highway, just south of Port Hedland, is seen as a place where people from different language groups can come together to discuss common issues affecting Aboriginal communities across the region. Stemming from the actions taken in the lead up to the 1946 Pilbara Strike, when Aboriginal people held secret meetings in remote bush locations to plan an ambitious three-year walk off by Aboriginal pastoral workers who were living on cattle stations in conditions of virtual slavery, Pilbara Aboriginal people continued in their efforts to advocate for improved conditions and outcomes by organising bush meetings. During the land rights era, from the late-1970s, Yule River became the focal point for such gatherings which were often attended by up to 2,000 Aboriginal people from all over the Pilbara. At this time, "Old Man Parker" (born Herbert), was the Pilbara representative for the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee, the first national body elected by Aboriginal people, and introduced by the Whitlam Government. Mr Parker presided over these meetings on the river's sandy banks as Aboriginal people from all over the Pilbara region gathered to talk about lands trust business, housing complaints, and land rights. Many important initiatives have been borne from Yule River meetings, with both concerns and solutions coming directly from Pilbara Aboriginal people; and with government expected to attend to hear and address their concerns. Through the efforts of then YMAC Co-Chairperson, Mrs Doris Eaton (whose father was a key player in the 1946 Pilbara Strike), and the YMAC Pilbara Regional Committee, the Yule River meetings recommenced in 2014. All language groups from across the region are invited to attend these meetings and share their concerns. Much like they were decades ago, gatherings at Yule River are an important opportunity for a diverse range of Aboriginal voices to be heard.