



## Kariyarra people celebrate native title win

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*Justice Barker from the Federal Court of Australia congratulates Traditional Owner Raylene Gordon-Button on Kariyarra's native title determination.*

The Kariyarra people yesterday celebrated the recognition of their determination of native title by the Federal Court. About 140 people attended the on-Country Court hearing at the Civic Gardens in Port Hedland. It has been a 20 year-long journey for the Kariyarra people to achieving native title recognition.

The Kariyarra people's native title claim (WAD 6169 of 1998) was lodged in 1998.

The Determination Area covers about 17,354 square kilometres of Kariyarra traditional country and encompasses – the town of Port Hedland, the Aboriginal community of Yandeyarra, several pastoral leases and mining operations.

Justice Barker congratulated the Kariyarra Applicants on their native title determination.

His Honour, Justice Barker of the Federal Court stated:



“It’s always great to look around and see the children who are here, who we all know will carry the Kariyarra Law on into the future. Congratulations to all of you.

...There’s a lot of people who have all engaged in the process in a commendable fashion and to sum that up, I really do, from the bottom of my heart congratulate everybody on the job they have done in this matter.”

All Kariyarra Country and waters are important to the Kariyarra People. Some areas of particular cultural, historical and environmental significance within the Determination Area include Yandeyarra Reserves, the Abydos homestead and Reserve (containing many ancient rock engravings), Mumbillina Bluff, Friendly Creek, Wamaranya, Marrapikurinya, Mt Dove, Kangan, Boodarie Station, Portree Pool, Mt Frisco and Munda Station.

The Determination Area is home to places of special spiritual significance to the Kariyarra people, in particular the burial places of the old people, whose spirits still inhabit Kariyarra country today.

The Kariyarra claim area has many rivers, the largest being the Yule (Kakurrka Muri) and Turner (Kapankalanha) Rivers, which are major topographic features of the Determination Area and importantly, are home to the mythological water serpent – the Warlu.

The Kariyarra people have maintained a traditional connection to this area since time immemorial, with a vibrant living culture maintained through stories, spiritual connections to the ancestors and country, caring for and managing country and waters, and by passing on traditional knowledge through each generation.

Kariyarra people have a strong connection to their land and waters through their intrinsic local knowledge of its natural resources and the land and seascape. This same law and culture is still very alive today and is passed on through the generations in the same way as it has been for thousands of years.

Traditional Owner Donny Wilson said:

“Today means a lot for us. We’ve waited for over 20 years and our family and claimant group are very happy to receive Native Title. It’s emotional, because of our people who have been with us and are now gone. If it wasn’t for them we wouldn’t be where we are today”

The celebration was facilitated by Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC), the Native Title Representative Body for the Yamatji region.

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation Chief Executive Officer Simon Hawkins said:

“Congratulations to the Kariyarra people. YMAC has worked long term with the Kariyarra people, with Port Hedland being the heart of our operations in the Pilbara and located within Kariyarra Country.

“Together we have achieved a great deal, including many Future Act Agreements, a Land ILUA negotiated with the WA State Government, setting up the Kariyarra Aboriginal Corporation (KAC) and Kariyarra Land Aboriginal Corporation (KLAC), and now a successful native title determination.

This is the beginning of a new phase in what has been 20-year long legal process for Kariyarra to achieve native title recognition. This determination has come about because of the hard work and persistence of Kariyarra people, sadly some of whom are no longer with us.

I would like to thank the Kariyarra people for their kind support and hospitality on their Country. We look forward to working together in the future to continue to create a legacy for the Kariyarra people”.

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

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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.

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