



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



COVID-19 - YMAC STAFF WORKING REMOTELY

A message for YMAC Members, clients and community from the CEO

As part of community effort to slow the spread of COVID-19 and effects of the virus, YMAC has made the decision to partially close offices and have staff work from home for a three week period commencing Monday, 23 March.

Fortunately, as far as we are aware, no YMAC staff member has contracted COVID-19. This decision has not been informed by any specific incidents of COVID-19 among staff, or their contacts. We are taking this step as a precautionary measure to ensure that we look after our members, clients and staff, and the benefits to the broader community.

While the number of staff present in offices will be largely reduced, we will continue to deliver services by phone and email, and will use digital tools and technology whenever possible.

This decision has also been informed by the following larger decisions in the sector:

1. The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) has cancelled all non-essential travel for staff across Australia and YMAC is following this example.
2. Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Ben Wyatt MLA this week announced closing access in and out of remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia.
3. Numerous government agencies, corporations including mining company offices in Perth have already closed offices, with staff working remotely. They have also advised staff to cancel all non-essential travel until further notice.
4. The Federal Court has advised that it will be vacating all listings and other Court events until the end of June 2020, except for those matters that can be dealt with entirely by phone/video conference.

Regarding point 4, current Federal Court hearings have been vacated, and all other prospective on-Country matters (including consent determinations) have been postponed.

This action will only impact native title work related to a small number of claims, who will be contacted directly by their claim lawyer. Working groups can communicate with their claim group lawyer; staff are looking at innovated ways to progress work with you differently.

Of course, there will be some essential client meetings and meetings among our staff which will need to occur in the ordinary course, consistent with client needs. YMAC will contact you to discuss meeting arrangements which – where possible – will be conducted with everyone's health and wellbeing as priority.

If you have any questions about business continuity, please contact staff via their individual email or phone. Please let us know if we should be aware of any requirements you have put in place for your organisation, as we want to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all.

An alternative way of making contact with each office during business hours is –

Perth: (08) 9268 7000

Geraldton: (08) 9965 6222

Port Hedland: (08) 9160 3800

Finally, I thank you for your patience during this difficult time, and thank you for your understanding as we work through the best way of handling this unprecedented situation.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Hawkins
CEO