



Pilbara for Purpose

2 December 2021

Dear Premier McGowan,

Pilbara for Purpose (P4P) is the peak membership body of the 'For Purpose' sector in the Pilbara. P4P is the connector of Pilbara community services in the Pilbara, enabling it to achieve best practice, foster effective collaboration and have a voice at the regional level. We have members from across the Pilbara, who deliver a range of social services to the Pilbara communities. Governed by a group of experienced Directors from across the Pilbara, with a passion for the sector, P4P strives to operate as a regional peak body that is trusted, promotes innovation, actively collaborates and represents the vibrancy, resilience and needs of the For Purpose sector in the Pilbara.

As a membership body comprising Aboriginal Corporations and non-Aboriginal organisations who work closely with Aboriginal people across the Pilbara, Pilbara for Purpose is truly shocked and upset by the destruction of 46,000 year old rock caves in the Pilbara last year. It is completely unacceptable that we stand by and let Australia's cultural heritage be harmed or destroyed every day.

Pilbara for Purpose is extremely disappointed that the draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021, which in its current form will not stop the destruction of irreplaceable cultural heritage sites, was introduced to Parliament on 17 November and subsequently passed through the Legislative Assembly, without first sharing it with Aboriginal people for proper review. The ACH Bill was only made available in full on the Government's website late on 16 November, a clear sign of disrespect to Traditional Owners.

Hundreds of cultural heritage sites are at risk. Many intersect sacred waterways, cave systems, Songlines and Dreamtime locations with irreplaceable engravings, paintings and artefacts dating back tens of thousands of years. We all have a responsibility to preserve this important connection to the past for future generations.

The world is watching on as we fail to meet the standards set out by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We must protect the world's oldest living continuous culture. We must respect the authority of Aboriginal people and their strong cultural responsibility to protect and care for Country and significant sites. They must have the final say on what happens to their cultural heritage.

We are doing what we can to stop the destruction by educating our members and advocating for the protection of all Aboriginal cultural heritage sites. We implore you, as WA's elected leader, with the power and influence that comes with that, to do what you can to also protect Australia's cultural heritage.

We do not want development to stop or to put an end to mining. And neither do Aboriginal people. They know that protection and profit can coexist in harmony. We fully support the proposed Heritage Protection Plan as the way to successfully manage the delicate balance in practice – to stop the destruction without stopping development.

We strongly urge you and your government to work together with Aboriginal people in true partnership to co-create a new law that will stop the ongoing destruction and ensure the right balance between heritage protection and economic benefit. The Heritage Protection Plan should be enshrined in that new legislation.





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This new law should:

- put Aboriginal people at the centre of consultation, negotiation and agreement-making about their Country and their heritage
- ensure the voices of Aboriginal people and Industry can be heard equally and decisions made in accordance with jointly defined and agreed criteria
- represent 'best practice' in the field of cultural heritage management or protection; and, above all
- be strong enough to stop another disaster.

Through genuine partnership and shared decision-making, Aboriginal people believe we can protect the world's oldest continuous living culture, and preserve the irreplaceable connection to the past, without negatively impacting the economic benefits that flow from mining now. Pilbara for Purpose believes and supports this 100%.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to get this right for the benefit of all Australians. The bottom line is that many, many more significant sites will be harmed or destroyed unless we work together to create a new law to protect Australia's cultural heritage. We need a law that protects and allows us to celebrate this cultural heritage together. We are calling on our leaders to understand that our unique challenges should be addressed with a unique policy.

Pilbara for Purpose supports Traditional Owner groups from across the state in calling for your government to hold off progressing the ACH Bill any further, at least until such time it can be sufficiently understood and critiqued, and following the occurrence of the 'Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act Workshop (18-19 January 2022).

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Winkler
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This letter is supported by the following P4P members in the Pilbara:

Headspace Pilbara
EPIS Incorporated
VSwans Onslow
Yaandina Community Services
Newman Women's Shelter
KIN Disability Advocacy Inc
Andy Barrow, Port Hedland
Tom Price Youth Support Association
Nintirri Centre

