

Media Statement

1 December 2014

GOVERNMENT ONCE AGAIN IGNORES THE CONCERNS OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS ON PROTECTION OF HERITAGE

The National Native Title Council (NNTC) is extremely concerned about the introduction of the Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Bill into Parliament.

NNTC's Chief Executive Officer, Brian Wyatt said that the Government has once again ignored the concerns of Traditional Owners across the State. "The Government panders to the interests of miners, in this case to expedite access to land, yet leaves the protection of significant Aboriginal heritage in the hands of one bureaucrat, the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

"The Government is pushing ahead with amendments to the legislation without having even drafted the accompanying regulations," said Mr Wyatt. "We don't even know the extent of the powers that the CEO of the Department will have.

"We believe that if this Act passes through Parliament in its current form, the protection of Aboriginal heritage is in serious peril.

"The Government has consulted widely on two occasions on the amendments, yet on both those occasions the wishes of Traditional Owners have been ignored," said Mr Wyatt. "The Bill should be redrafted to include measures for greater protection of Aboriginal heritage and to allow Aboriginal people a more meaningful role in the administration of the Act."

The Government has been provided with a petition of over 1600 signatures objecting to the Bill and a delegation of Traditional Owners converged on Parliament House to voice their concerns in person.

"Aboriginal people are rightly calling for more consultation," said Mr Wyatt. "And the Government should be listening to those concerns and remove the Bill from Parliament so we can have a greater say in how our heritage sites can be fully protected.

"The NNTC strongly urges the Minister to stop ignoring Aboriginal people, remove the legislation and enter a meaningful consultation process."

The NNTC is the peak body for native title representative bodies and service providers.

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