

## ***Media Statement***

24 February 2016

### **ABORIGINAL HERITAGE BILL BACK ON THE TABLE**

The National Native Title Council (NNTC) is extremely concerned that the Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Bill has been placed back on the notice paper for the consideration of Parliament.

NNTC's Chairman, Nolan Hunter said that the Government continues to ignore the concerns of Traditional Owners across the State. "It appears that the Government is stubbornly pushing ahead with the proposed amendments to the legislation despite the many objections and the protests of Traditional owners.

"The Bill leaves the protection of significant Aboriginal heritage in the hands of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs," said Mr Hunter. "However the extent of the powers that the CEO of the Department will have is left to Regulations that haven't even been drafted yet.

"Despite the concerns raised by numerous stakeholders, the Bill remains detrimental to the protection of Aboriginal heritage," said Mr Hunter. "The level of protection under the amended legislation remains woefully inadequate, particularly if you compare it to the levels of protection to European built heritage. Aboriginal heritage is just as important to the broad community as European heritage.

"We believe that if the Act passes through Parliament in its current form, the ability of Traditional Owners to fulfill their cultural obligations in the protection of their Aboriginal heritage will be diminished.

"We do not have any confidence in the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to adequately protect our cultural heritage nor do we trust the Department to act responsibly in light of the fact that many significant sites having already been removed from the State register," said Mr Hunter.

"This Government has not given any hint that they wish to protect the cultural history of Aboriginal people in this State and the NNTC again calls on the Government to remove the Bill from Parliament and engage properly with Traditional Owners on the best way to protect and manage Aboriginal heritage".

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

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