



**Aboriginal
Heritage
Action
Alliance**

**MEDIA RELEASE
27 July 2021**

"Traditional Owners Excluded from Cultural Heritage Briefing"

159 submissions were made to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on the draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill (WA), 2020 after a "consultation" period of just 8 weeks to June/July last year. WA was in its first covid shut-down, and remote Aboriginal communities were in hard lockdown. Nevertheless, Aboriginal and cultural heritage organisations made lengthy submissions detailing the Bill's many failings in meeting its protection objectives.

Over the last year Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC's), Land Councils, Traditional Owner action groups and expert organisations from across Western Australia have continued to make their case clear to the Minister: the Bill affords no protection to places of significance (like Juukan Gorge) and must not be introduced in its current form.

"There have been 20 or more drafts of the Bill since July 2020", said National Native Title Council Chair and Tjiwarl Aboriginal Corporation Board Member Kado Muir. "None of these drafts have been shared with Traditional Owner groups."

The Minister is now planning a briefing session with a select group of stakeholders, but few Traditional Owners have been invited. There are 68 PBC's in Western Australia. PBC's are the groups with lawfully determined land-holding relationships. Those people with the cultural authority to speak for significant sites must to be intimately involved in designing appropriate legislation.

"We have sought invitations to this briefing and these requests have been ignored", said Kado. "If the Minister is serious about protecting cultural heritage, he will start listening to what measures are required to achieve it."

"We need meaningful engagement on this important matter so together we can create legislation which allows for development projects to occur whilst also protecting sites of significance. It happens in other parts of Australia, it can happen here".

AHAA is an alliance of senior Traditional Owners and supporting professional heritage organisations formed in response to the Bill. AHAA's objectives are to co-design legislation which appropriately protects Indigenous Cultural Heritage in WA and nationally.

Contacts: Kado Muir - 0477 184 957 or Naomi Howells – 0432 152 883