



**Aboriginal
Heritage
Action
Alliance**

**MEDIA RELEASE
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Expected passage of WA Cultural Heritage Bill: Aboriginal Heritage Action Alliance demands miners institute a moratorium on further sacred sites destruction

With the WA Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill widely expected to be passed by Parliament today, the Aboriginal Heritage Action Alliance, led by senior Traditional Owners with cultural authority from across WA, has condemned the WA government for rushing through laws which enable the continued destruction of sacred sites and called on big miners Rio Tinto, BHP and FMG to voluntarily place a moratorium on actioning existing and proposed approvals to destroy further cultural heritage.

In September, members of AHAA and other prominent leaders initiated a complaint about the Bill to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which [led the Committee to write to the Australian government last week, outlining its concerns.](#)

Nyikina Warrwa Traditional Custodian and academic, Dr Anne Poelina said, “The opportunity the government had to right wrongs and discard racist laws has been squandered.

“Our power to speak for our Country and self-determine how it is protected has been disregarded. We won’t stop until our voice is heard.

“McGowan has failed us. Mining companies must now show they understand their responsibilities and commit to pausing further destruction until this mess is worked through.

“Our people have responsibility to protect sacred sites.

“These new laws, which were thrust upon us without proper consultation, do not empower us with the right to say ‘no’ or give rights of appeal.

“Our determination to gain justice stays strong. We will redouble our pursuit of justice through the United Nations and look to the national stage to override the WA laws.”

Leslie Schultz, a Ngadju traditional custodian, native title holder, and Founder and Chair of Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation said, “The Juukan Gorge Inquiry shamed the WA government for failing to lift its game and placing the interests of miners

above protecting cultural heritage. Unbowed, McGowan has continued pushing this feeble new legislation.

“Rio Tinto, BHP and FMG have been silent on these weak new laws. If we’re to enter a new era post Juukan Gorge, where our heritage and rights are respected, then miners should join us in demanding stronger protections. Otherwise, they’re just shedding crocodile tears while destroying our heritage for their own profit.

“We will keep fighting until we win our right to stop untrammelled disregard for our sacred sites, with what we know is the widespread support of the community here and overseas.”

AHAA will now work with others to ensure [national laws which are being co-designed in partnership with First Nations people](#) will deliver cultural heritage protection.

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Further background on the WA Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill:

AHAA website <https://aboriginalheritagewa.org.au>

High quality photos:

AHAA members at WA Parliament [here](#)

3 min AHAA Video about the Bill’s deficiencies [here](#)

The Aboriginal Heritage Action Alliance (AHAA) is a community action group, led by senior Traditional Owners with cultural authority from across Western Australia, working to protect and preserve cultural heritage for all.