

Western Desert people vote to improve operations

Media Statement: Monday, 6 August 2018

A special general meeting (SGM) of the Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation (WDLAC) held on Friday 3 August 2018, accepted an amendment to rules regarding eligibility to be a member Director.

WDLAC is the Registered Native Title Body Corporate holding Martu Title on trust for the Martu people, by order of the Federal Court dated 17 July 2003.

The Martu people are recognised as one of Australia's only Native Title groups to have exclusive use, occupation, possession and control and interests over such a large area of land.

Simon Hawkins, Acting Chief Executive of WDLAC, said to ensure reasonable opportunity for members to participate, the board called for the meeting to be held via teleconference with meeting sites at Bidyadanga, Punmu, Parnngurr, and Fitzroy Crossing.

"The WDLAC Board of Directors called the SGM to look at improving operations after an investigation into a complaint received in 2016 uncovered further mismanagement," Mr Hawkins said.

"The findings were sent for independent advice and there is a request before the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) in relation to further investigation of the discovered issues.

"Changes to the rules regarding eligibility to be a member Director were carried with an 88 per cent majority and will now be reviewed by ORIC."

Mr Hawkins is also CEO of the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC), a not-for-profit organisation run by an Aboriginal Board of Directors which provides a range of services including Native Title claim and future-act representation, heritage protection services, community and economic development and natural resource management.

"YMAC provides Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) services to WDLAC to hold and manage native title in accordance with the objectives of the group; and in managing stakeholder interest in access, or regulation of native title land and waters, by providing a legal entity to manage and conduct the affairs of the native title holders," Mr Hawkins said.

"It is YMAC's mission to work with Aboriginal people to pursue recognition and acceptance of culture in Country, and a strong future for people and Country.

"Our focus at YMAC is apparent in everything we do – in ensuring enduring heritage and culture, resolving native title claims, and seeking outcomes that provide a strong legacy for Aboriginal people, through respect, professionalism, integrity and collaboration."

MEDIA CONTACT: Jane Grljusich, 0427 463 796, jgrljusich@ymac.org.au

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

WESTERN DESERT LANDS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION (WDLAC) IS THE PRESCRIBED BODY CORPORATE FOR THE MARTU PEOPLE OF THE CENTRAL WESTERN DESERT REGION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

On behalf of Martu People, WDLAC holds native title rights and interests, including the right to exclusive use, occupation and possession, which includes the right to control access, of 136,000 square kilometres of land within the Central Western Desert region. WDLAC works for the cultural, social and economic benefit of the current and future generations of Martu.

For all media enquiries please contact **Jane Grljusich**, JGrljusich@ymac.org.au, 0427 463 796