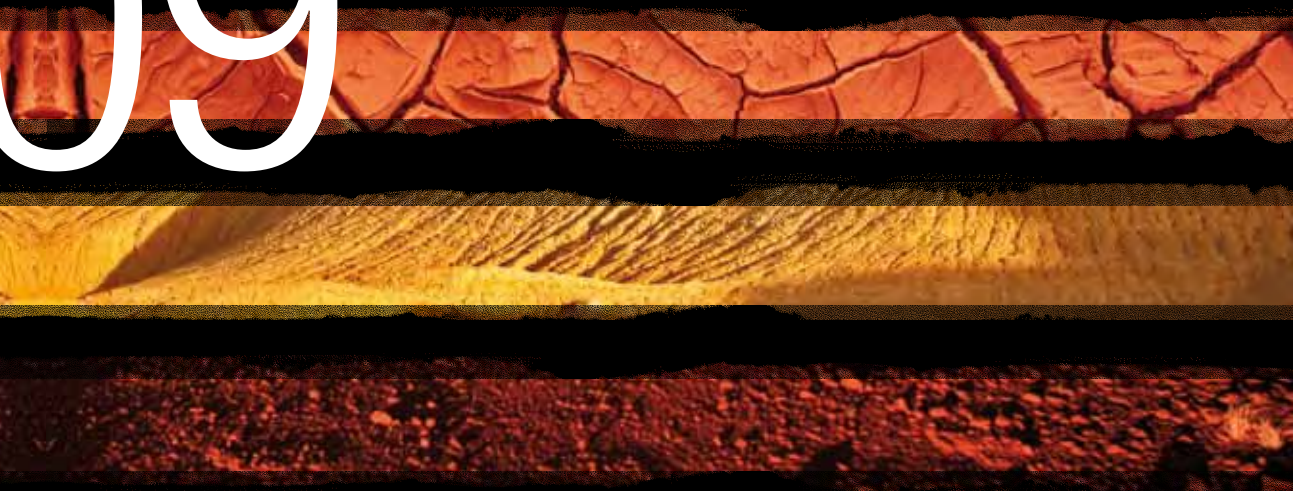


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Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation  
ANNUAL REPORT



Yamatji Marlpa  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

The Hon Jenny Macklin MP  
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

15th October 2009

Dear Minister,

**Letter of Transmittal**

In accordance with section 203DC of the Native Title Act 1993, we have pleasure in presenting the annual report of the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation, together with the organisation's audited financial statements for the financial year ended June 30, 2009

Yours sincerely,



**Roy Bellotti**  
Co-Chairperson  
Yamatji Region



**Mrs Doris Eaton**  
Co-Chairperson  
Pilbara Region

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for the Traditional Owners of the Pilbara, Murchison and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia.

We represent 24 native title claim groups, all with their own culture, language and traditions. Our representative area covers over 1 million square kilometers, with offices in Geraldton, South Hedland, Karratha, Tom Price and Perth.


YMAC is run by an Aboriginal Board of Directors to protect Yamatji and Marlpa country. We do this by providing a range of professional services to Traditional Owner groups.

**Our work includes:**

- Legal representation and research to assist with native title claims
- Negotiating land use agreements
- Heritage protection services
- Community, economic and environmental projects

YMAC operates under the *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA) and the Corporations (*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*) Act 2006.

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# Directors' Report

We've come a long way over the past twelve months and the Board of Directors thank management and staff for a year that has delivered real outcomes for Traditional Owners and their country.

During the reporting period, the Board of Directors completed extensive consultation with members to enable compliance with the new governing legislation *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act*. This has resulted in our new rule book and a new name; Yamatji Maripa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC). Our new name reflects the cultural diversity and partnership between both regions represented by the organisation.

Funding from the Commonwealth for the Pilbara Connection Project has enabled YMAC to fast-track a significant amount of native title claims. As a result, we are now coordinating one of the largest projects in native title history, which we hope to see culminate in determinations over large parts of the State. Although the project has been Pilbara-specific, it has allowed us to focus resources on the Yamatji region, with substantial research undertaken in relation to the Wajarri Yamatji, Nanda and Gnulli claims.

While this is great news for Pilbara and Yamatji Traditional Owners, we are conscious that this demand for consultants has seen a strain on the industry nationally. If native title is to proceed at a rapid pace, the shortage of quality consultants needs to be addressed.



*Doris Eaton,  
Pilbara Chairperson*



*Roy Bellotti,  
Yamatji Chairperson*

### Yamatji Highlights

In the Yamatji region, the Thudgari connection report was accepted by the WA State Government, with a determination expected to proceed in late 2009.

Western Australia's mining industry continued to expand southwards, with a number of native title groups affected by the development of mining and infrastructure projects in the region including the Oakajee Port & Rail Project and Sinosteel-Midwest's Weld Range Project.

In April, the Naaguja people signed an agreement with MGMP Ltd, incorporating financial benefits, employment and contracting opportunities. Negotiations with the Wajarri Yamatji people over the proposed Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) are progressing well, with the group finalising its Murchison Radio-Astronomy Observatory ILUA, a truly ground-breaking and long-term deal between Wajarri Yamatji, the State and Federal Governments, CSIRO and YMAC.

The Caring for Country Unit completed two major projects; the Audit of Priority Heritage Sites and The Engagement of Yamatji Traditional Owners in Natural Resource Management. In August, our new publication, Yamatji Business News, was launched promoting Indigenous economic development in the Mid-West.

### Pilbara Highlights

A highlight for the Pilbara this year was the recognition of the Nyangumarta People's native title rights to Country. The determination, held on 11 June, gained national attention and we congratulate Nyangumarta on more than a decade of hard work to achieve this outcome for their people and country. The Kariyarra connection report was also accepted by the State, with a determination expected to proceed in 2010.

Despite the global financial downturn, mining agreements continued to progress at a strong pace. In December, the Njamaal People and Atlas Iron negotiated a groundbreaking agreement in only six weeks, raising the bar for compensation payments in the Pilbara. In April, Innawonga and Bunjima signed a land access deed with Iron Ore Holdings, featuring a strong commitment to agreement implementation. Kurama Marthudenera finalised mining and heritage agreements with Citic Pacific Mining and were also successful in proving that Mineralogy had not negotiated with them in good faith over mining tenements on their country.

In April, the Aboriginal Communities Charitable Organisations Inc was launched, an initiative of YMAC's Business Development Unit. Its first project has been a food distribution centre, delivering inexpensive foods to low-income families. We look forward to supporting other local initiatives to help close the gap in our communities.

# CEO's Report

The 2008/09 financial year was one of the organisation's most successful to date, with strong claim progress, culminating in the recognition of the Nyangumarta people's native title rights in June.

Despite the global economic downturn, WA's mining industry continued to dominate the work of the organisation. For most companies it was 'business as usual' with YMAC conducting 376 native title group meetings in the reporting period; 148 meetings to progress native title claims and 228 to negotiate mining agreements.

The political landscape changed significantly, with a new Liberal State Government elected in September 2008, and the current Federal Government announcing new initiatives and legislative changes with the potential to affect our members. YMAC engaged with government at local and national levels, and made formal submissions on a range of issues including the Federal Working Group on Native Title Payments, the National Indigenous Representative Body, Amendments to the Native Title Act, The Pilbara Mining and Water Plan and the Australian Human Rights Consultation. YMAC contributed to government discussions through the National Native Title Council, and the Federal Attorney General's Native Title Consultative Forum. YMAC's Pilbara Regional Manager, Nyaparur Jeffries was also selected as one of 100 Indigenous leaders to participate in the National Indigenous Representative Body Workshop.



*Simon Hawkins,  
Chief Executive Officer*

In December we hosted our Uranium and Native Title Conference, allowing over one hundred Traditional Owners, industry and government representatives to discuss what will be an increasingly important issue in the West. YMAC was also represented at industry and public forums including the National Native Title Conference and the Negotiating Native Title Conference.

In July 2008, YMAC underwent a smooth transition into our new corporate structure, bringing the heritage and research units together to ensure knowledge about culture and country is shared and protected. Our future acts and legal units were also combined to bring a strategic approach to agreements and negotiations. During the reporting period YMAC's recruitment costs reduced by 70%, and the successes of 08/09 are a reflection of a stable and dedicated workforce focused on the delivery of professional services to Traditional Owners. Financially, we have seen our sixth consecutive clear external audit, and thanks to additional Commonwealth funding, we were able to refurbish the Geraldton office and our new office in Tom Price. New payroll systems and a major IT network upgrade were also put in place to allow increased productivity throughout the organisation. The year ahead will see video-conferencing used to assist business processes, lower travel costs and reduce the organisation's carbon footprint.

Over the next twelve months we anticipate the resolution of several native title claims and the finalisation of the Rio Tinto Iron Ore negotiations. The impending Right to Negotiate decision between the Puutu Kunti Kurrama & Pinikura People and Fortescue Metals Group has the potential to have a negative impact on Traditional Owners rights and interests nationally. An unfavorable decision will affect Traditional Owners' ability to have constructive input into development on their country and to benefit from opportunities to close the economic gap. It should also be noted that most mining companies are using the Right to Negotiate as an opportunity to form constructive, long-term relationships with Traditional Owners.

In the year ahead we will also concentrate our focus on alternative approaches to native title issues and will be encouraging government to work with us to provide support for Prescribed Bodies Corporate, agreement implementation and other post-native title issues.

On behalf of the Board and Management, I thank and congratulate our members and staff for their dedication and work throughout the year. I look forward to YMAC building on this momentum, bringing greater outcomes for Yamatji and Pilbara Traditional Owners in the years to come.