

MURUJUGA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldvis — Minister for Environment) [12.13 pm]: Today, I would like to update the house on the Murujuga Cultural Landscape World Heritage nomination. Last week, I had the extraordinary pleasure of celebrating the World Heritage nomination being submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre with Hon Tanya Plibersek, federal Minister for the Environment and Water, and the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation at Murujuga.

In Australia, we talk about having the world’s oldest continuous culture—up to 60 000 years of First Nations’ existence on the Australian continent. At Murujuga, it is all around. Evidence is still in place of industry, commerce, education, culture, law and artistic expression. There is clear evidence of food preparation and other day-to-day activities—signs of civilization dating back thousands of years. Of course, most strikingly, are the more than one million stunning petroglyphs presenting a huge and breathtaking living museum of ancient art and culture. It is a place worthy of acknowledgement and protection. This submission takes us a step closer to achieving that at the highest level and on the world stage.

The preparation and submission of the nomination meets the 2017 election commitment of the McGowan government. The preparation of a World Heritage nomination is a complex and challenging task. This nomination has taken around four years to complete. A central theme of this nomination is the Ngarda-Ngarli philosophy, translated in English as, “We all come together for Country.” This has been demonstrated by those involved in the nomination process. It is a great example of what collaboration and cooperation can achieve between local, state and commonwealth governments, industry, community and, of course, the traditional owners. I especially want to thank the traditional owners for their invaluable contributions, passion and commitment for the nomination, and persistence in seeking to protect and elevate this country. This submission is significant as it is the first Aboriginal-led nomination for Western Australia.

The next steps are that the World Heritage Centre will examine the nomination for compliance against the format prescribed in the operational guidelines. If deemed complete, the nomination will be formally accepted for assessment and made publicly available on the UNESCO website. The assessment process will take about 18 months and will consist of a desktop review and then a site visit by independent advisory bodies, which is likely to take place later in 2023. Based on this time frame, the earliest a decision is likely to be made by the World Heritage Committee is mid-2024. If successful, Murujuga would be only the second Australian World Heritage site to receive World Heritage status for its Aboriginal cultural importance. I hope to be able to update this place soon in celebration of Murujuga’s inscription on the World Heritage List.