



Hon Ben Wyatt MLA
Treasurer; Minister for Finance; Aboriginal Affairs; Lands

Our Ref: 69-19428/57

Dr Joe E. Watkins
President
Society for American Archaeology

Via email: David_lindsay@saa.org

Dear Dr Watkins

REFORM OF THE ABORIGINAL HERITAGE ACT 1972

Thank you for your letter dated 16 June 2020 expressing the Society for American Archaeology's (SAA) disappointment at the destruction of ancient Aboriginal sites in Juukan Gorge by Rio Tinto.

The recent destruction of the Juukan Gorge rock shelters in Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura country is devastating for all parties involved, and highlights the inadequacy of current legislative protection for Aboriginal cultural heritage in Western Australia.

The Western Australian Government has committed to introduce new, modernised Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation into Parliament that reflects best practice in the recognition and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage. This legislation will provide an Aboriginal voice in the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage, and lead to better decisions and improved protection. Importantly, under the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2020, Aboriginal people and land users will be afforded the same rights of appeal regarding decisions made.

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2020 is expected to be introduced into Parliament prior to the end of the year. This will be preceded by a final round of consultation on the draft Bill which will commence in the coming months.

Thank you for writing to me regarding this important matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ben Wyatt', written over a blue scribble.

Ben Wyatt MLA
MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS
17 JUL 2020