

LIBRARY

Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

This PDF has been created for digital preservation. It may be used for research but is not suitable for other purposes. It may be superseded by a more current version or just be out-of-date and have no relevance to current situations.



The Traditional Owners of Murujuga

The Western Australian Government recognises the Traditional Owners and custodians of Murujuga; the past, present and future generations of Ngarda-Ngarli, and their ongoing connection to this sacred country.

Who are Ngarda-Ngarli?

Ngarda-Ngarli¹ is the collective term for the five Traditional Owner groups of Murujuga, being Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi, Yaburara, Mardudhunera and Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo², who have been part of this cultural landscape for tens of thousands of years and have a deep and spiritual connection to it. Before European occupation of Murujuga in the 1860s, Ngarda-Ngarli were living in their own traditional lands. Many groups travelled to Murujuga for trade, marriage, kinship and to use the resources offered by the land.

Traditional Aboriginal belief is that the rock art is the work of creation spirit-beings known as Marrga (creation spirits) who, during the Dreaming times, formulated the rules of social conduct for human beings to follow. The Marrga left the rock art behind as permanent visual reminders of how the Law should be followed and they are places of continuing spiritual power. The rock art has deep meaning for Ngarda-Ngarli, providing a tangible link to stories, customs and knowledge of their land and resources and connecting them to the events and people of the past and their beliefs today.

What is the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation?

[Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation](#) (MAC), which represents the Traditional Owner groups, was established in 2006 as body corporate for the Burrup and Maitland Industrial Estates Agreement (BMIEA). Today MAC administers the implementation of contractual obligations of the BMIEA. Under this agreement, the Western Australian Government acquired native title rights and interests to secure the Burrup and Maitland industrial land in exchange for a range of benefits including freehold title and joint management over the Murujuga National Park.

However, MAC is not restricted to only BMIEA business by either the BMIEA or its constitution. MAC is partnering with the Western Australian Government to prepare the World Heritage nomination for Murujuga and implement the [Murujuga Rock Art Strategy](#) and [Murujuga Rock Art Monitoring Program](#).

The leadership and cultural guidance of MAC is central to this World Heritage nomination process to ensure that it adequately captures the meaning of Murujuga to the Traditional Owners, their connection to this country and aspirations for it.

MAC has around 1200 members and is the most representative group of people with cultural authority for Murujuga. It is acknowledged that no single organisation represents all Aboriginal interests for Murujuga. Those who are not part of MAC are able and encouraged to participate and provide input to the World Heritage nomination process, through other appropriate forums.

Murujuga National Park

Murujuga National Park has the distinction of being Western Australia's 100th national park. It is also unique in that it is the first jointly managed national park in Western Australia. Created in 2013, it covers an area of 4,913 hectares within the Burrup Peninsula. It is owned by MAC and leased back to the Western Australian Government as national park, jointly managed by MAC and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. The [Murujuga National Park Management Plan 78](#) (2013) together with the [Murujuga Cultural Management Plan](#) (2016) and Murujuga Park Council provides the management framework for the park. The Murujuga Rangers from the [Murujuga Land and Sea Unit](#) conduct patrols and undertake work throughout the national park and are a critical component of the management of the national park and the surrounding National Heritage Listed area. Over the long-term Ngarda-Ngarli seek to manage the park with a greater degree of independence.

Aboriginal customary activities

Aboriginal rights to use native species for food, cultural and family reasons are enshrined in national and state legislation. In 2012, changes to the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* extended opportunities for Aboriginal people to access lands and waters managed under this Act (such as the Murujuga National Park and the Dampier Archipelago Nature reserves) to carry out [customary activities](#) such as preparing or consuming food and medicine, engaging in artistic, ceremonial or other cultural activities. World Heritage Listing will not change the customary rights of eligible Ngarda-Ngarli to hunt, fish and collect natural resources from within the Murujuga National Park and Dampier Archipelago Nature Reserves.

How can I be involved in the nomination?

MAC and the Western Australian Government welcomes stakeholder involvement in the nomination process. To register for updates, please visit pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/murujuga.



¹ Pronounced as Nar-da Nar-lee

² Pronounced as Nar-loo-ma, Inn-gee-barn-dee, Ya-boo-da-ra, Mar-du-thun-ira, Wong-goo-too.