

MEDIA RELEASE

Destruction of Sacred Women's Site to begin on International Women's Day

We are deeply disturbed by the announcement of works beginning on Wahluu (Mount Panorama) that will see the destruction of a sacred Wiradyuri women's site. Work on the site is due to start on International Women's day, adding insult to injury.

Recently we have seen the destruction of Juukan Gorge in Western Australia and the felling of sacred Djap Wurrung birthing trees in Victoria. The enduring damages caused by acts such as these cannot be underestimated. We know that Aboriginal people have a deep spiritual connection with the land, and every time Country is damaged, desecrated or disrupted the impacts are irreversible.

The Traditional Owners of the Bathurst region, the Wiradyuri community believe that the summit of Wahluu was traditionally the location of a bora ringsite for the initiation of men and the teachings of law and men's business. It is also believed that Wahluu has a sacred women's site on the shoulder of the mountain, containing an unlocated burial of a significant Wiradyuri man and once had carved trees and markers reflecting its spiritual and ceremonial importance.

"The disrespect shown to the Wiradyuri Elders by the Local Council is appalling, this is 2021, and it is time that we start listening to First Nations people. The NAIDOC theme for this year is Heal Country, we desperately need to stop any further destruction", said Arlia Fleming, Managing Principal Solicitor of Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre.

The Wiradyuri Elders have proposed an alternative site for the Go Kart track. However, this has been rejected by the Council. Rather than try to come to an agreement the Council would rather enter into litigation. The Council's legal representatives have advised the Wiradyuri Elders that they are instructed to accept service of any court applications.

"We are devastated by this news, it is our cultural responsibility to care for our Country, and preserve our songlines. There has been so much desecration to Wiradyuri Country since the invaders made their way across the mountains. What people need to understand is that there is intangible cultural heritage, inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, when Country is destroyed, you destroy our culture", said Wiradyuri Elder, Yanhadarrambal, Uncle Jade Flynn, Wiradyuri Traditional Owners Central West Aboriginal Corporation.

"There are several anthropological reports that have found that Wahluu has cultural significance. It is astounding that the Council is valuing a Go Kart track over cultural heritage that is thousands of years old. There is also much local opposition to the track based on environmental and noise concerns, with a petition to 'Save McPhillamy Park that has over 2200 signatures" says Arlia Fleming, Managing Principal Solicitor of Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre.

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