

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

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Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1.4
Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division (WHM)
Topic: Emergency heritage listing
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Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: That is very useful. Can you just identify for us whether any single action by anybody at all was undertaken as a result of that emergency assessment report completed nearly four years ago, Commonwealth or state? Can you identify a single person who lifted a single finger in consequence of those recommendations in that report? You have identified that you do not have that at the table.

Mr Oxley: Yes, so we will take that one on notice.

Answer:

In 2011 the then Environment Minister directed the Australian Heritage Council to assess the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the Dampier Archipelago and any threats to the site, following a Senate motion calling for an emergency assessment. The Australian Heritage Council completed the assessment in 2012. The assessment did not contain formal recommendations. The assessment's key findings were that:

- Further work is required with Ngarda-Ngarli people to document the relationship between their beliefs and practices, and the rock art images on the archipelago.
- The highest risks to heritage values arise from potential threats related to industrial development and an incomplete knowledge of the extent of heritage; the latter compounded by limited surveys and minimal involvement of the Ngarda-Ngarli people.
- Although the area surrounding the site has been heavily impacted by industrial development, the site itself maintains high integrity and is in a stable condition.

The Commonwealth and state governments and stakeholders have undertaken a number of actions in response to these findings. Industry stakeholders have provided funding for rock art surveys and to document the beliefs and practices of the Ngarda-Ngarli people in relation to the rock art, including through the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation's Cultural Management Plan, the University of Western Australia's studies called 'Murujuga Dynamics of Dreaming' and 'Women in the Picture', and the University of Melbourne's study called 'Hearing Histories of the Western Pilbara: Dampier Archipelago Rock Art'. All parties, including the Department of the Environment, are collaborating to coordinate management and strengthen the involvement of the Ngarda-Ngarli people, including through annual strategic planning meetings and support for the Murujuga Rangers.