

**YAMATJI MARLPA BARNA BABA MAAJA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
YAMATJI LAND AND SEA COUNCIL
PILBARA NATIVE TITLE SERVICE
NATIVE TITLE REPRESENTATIVE BODY**

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, February 15, 2005

TRADITIONAL OWNERS GIVE GREEN LIGHT TO TELESCOPE PROJECT

Australian scientists officially confirmed the Australian site in the international race to host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) telescope on Friday, following the granting of permission by the traditional owners, the Wajarri People, to use the proposed site.

The agreement was reached at a Wajarri working group meeting on Friday after a presentation by Dr Michelle Storey of the Australian SKA Consortium Committee (ASKACC) team, who explained about the project and outlined the implications for Wajarri country. The Wajarri working group was represented by the Yamatji Land and Sea Council.

“As the traditional owners of the site, we are happy for the project to be based on our country and to be a part of this project,” said Pam Mongoo of the Wajarri People.

Ms Mongoo said that ASKACC and the Western Australian Government have been careful to consult with the traditional owners about whether the site would be appropriate and to discuss alternative sites that might be suitable for further astronomical investigation.

“Heritage protection remains our main concern with regard to the project. We will continue our support for the telescope as long as there exists agreement to provide heritage surveys and ongoing consultation about heritage protection,” Ms Mongoo said.

The SKA telescope is designed to collect astronomical information from the far reaches of space. The international site for the SKA will be selected by the International SKA Steering Committee in 2006.

The Australian candidate SKA site will be based on Mileura Station in the Murchison region of Western Australia, approximately 300 kilometres inland from the coast. Permission has also been granted by the station manager.

ASKACC consulted with representatives of the Wajarri people earlier this year in an attempt to find a site that would be both culturally appropriate and suitable for their scientific purposes.

Pam Mongoo said that this is an appropriate site for ASKACC to use because there are no areas of cultural significance nearby. It was also chosen because it is high, barren, flat and isolated.

The agreement by the Wajarri People for ASKACC to use this part of their country means that the project can now begin a selection of the site for initial activities as well as start the process of selecting other sites to investigate further.

"I am delighted that the Wajarri People have given us to go-ahead," said Dr Storey. "This is an exciting project and we look forward to working with the Wajarri People throughout its lifespan."

- ENDS -

The Yamatji Land and Sea Council is one of two operational divisions of the Yamatji Marlpa Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation (YMBBMAC) and represents native title claimants in the Yamatji region, which covers the Murchison and Gascoyne and is based in Geraldton. The Pilbara Native Title Service, the other division of YMBBMAC, provides native title representation in the Pilbara.

For further information, contact:

Marjorie Syddall, Public Relations & Communications Specialist
Yamatji Marlpa Barna Baba Maaja Aboriginal Corporation
Telephone: (08) 9268 7014
Switchboard: (08) 9268 7000
Mobile: 0407 645 646
Email: msyddall@yamatji.org.au