# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

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Charenton-le-Pont, 19 December 2024

H.E. Ms Greer Alblas Ambassador, Permanent Delegate Permanent Delegation of Australia to UNESCO Ambassade de l'Australie 4, rue Jean-Rey Paris Cedex 15 75724

# World Heritage List 2025 Murujuga Cultural Landscape (Australia) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2025. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation procedure.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to the "Murujuga Cultural Landscape" was carried out by Dr Xavier Forde (New Zealand) between the end of August and the beginning of September 2024. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organisation and implementation of the mission.

On 20 September 2024, an additional information letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the boundaries, the attributes, and the protection, conservation and management of the nominated property. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 6 November 2024 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2024, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2025. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with the mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2025.

We thank you and your Delegation for your availability and your participation in the meeting held on 26 November 2024 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting. During this last part of the meeting, the Panel has identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

## Boundaries of the nominated property

ICOMOS notes that announcements have been made in July-August 2024 by the Western Australian government regarding the additions to the Murujuga National Park of areas formerly zoned for future industrial activity, as well as the integration of West Intercourse Island and Legendre Island into the Murujuga National Park or the Dampier Archipelago conservation estate. ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could provide some clarification on this matter. Will these changes imply any modification

of the boundaries of the nominated property as proposed in the nomination dossier, and if so, could the State Party please provide a revised map showing the changes made to the boundaries and indicate the time frame for the completion of this extension?

Besides, ICOMOS understands that the boundaries are the result of a thoughtful and inclusive process that takes into account both the perspective of the Ngarda-Ngarli and the aspects inherent to the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property. However, there are still some cultural components related to the Ngarda-Ngarli, located within the industrial areas, which are not part of the nominated area. Could the State Party please indicate if, and how, the continuity of Murujuga as a cultural landscape is ensured, even without these cultural components being part of the proposed boundaries? Is there any legal and/or traditional protection in place to ensure that these sites are maintained?

In addition, the boundaries of the nominated property cover a large marine area. ICOMOS has understood that there is continuity, in terms of indigenous cosmology, between the landscape and the seascape, however ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could provide further explanation as regards the rationale for the delineation of the boundaries in the marine area.

#### Buffer zone and wider setting

The State Party has explained that they consider there is no need for a buffer zone as "the nominated property is protected through a comprehensive range of existing measures" including "traditional customary practices, and Australian, Western Australian and local legislation, management plans and strategies which provide statutory protection" (nomination dossier, p.2). However, ICOMOS would welcome clarification from the State Party as regards how activities in the immediate and wider setting are regulated in order to ensure that the attributes supporting the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are adequately protected in the long term.

In addition, ICOMOS has found several media articles referring to severe pollution issues from chemicalproducing industries outside the nominated property as a major threat against rock arts within the site and their conservation in the next decades. ICOMOS would be grateful if the State Party could specify how this threat is being controlled or mitigated. What regulations are in place to control levels of emission from industries in the region? ICOMOS understands that studies are currently being undertaken to assess the impact of these industries on the petroglyphs and on the nominated property. ICOMOS would appreciate to receive the results of these studies in their current state.

#### Underwater cultural heritage and biodiversity

ICOMOS also notes that other studies are being undertaken to understand and document the underwater cultural heritage that is part of the nominated property, in particular through the collecting of high-resolution bathymetry data. Are there any studies also undertaken regarding underwater biodiversity? Could the State Party please specify how the underwater cultural heritage and biodiversity are being managed and protected?

The nomination dossier informs in particular of the existence of the Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018. ICOMOS would be grateful if the State Party could share this document. Is there any other legal or management document which would allow to ensure that the underwater cultural heritage and biodiversity are properly preserved?

#### Tourism strategy

ICOMOS acknowledges the additional information provided regarding the Tourism Precinct project, and in particular that the schematic design for Tourism Precinct has been completed. Would it be possible to share this design with ICOMOS? Has the State Party conducted a Heritage Impact Assessment for this project?

In addition, the nomination dossier indicates that, to guide the progressive development of culturally appropriate visitor infrastructure, facilities and experiences, a Recreation Master Plan has been developed for the Murujuga National Park and the jointly managed islands of the Dampier Archipelago. ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could share this document.

## Use of the terms "petroglyphs" and "rock art"

ICOMOS notes that the draft statement of Outstanding Universal Value uses the terms "petroglyphs" and "rock art" interchangeably. ICOMOS would like to know whether this is intentional or rather an undifferentiation between the two wordings. Is there a preferred term for the Ngarda-Ngarli that could be standardised for future publications and signage? And could the State Party share a list of the terms used by the traditional owners and custodians of the nominated property?

# Transmission of knowledge

The nomination dossier informs that the Yaburara people are the first group to have lived in the area until the devastating consequences of European settlement decimated their numbers and required the coming together of neighbouring groups to protect the spirit of the place, which led to the formation of the larger Ngarda-Ngarli group. ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could indicate if, and how, the transmission of this culture is still ensured from older to younger generations today.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation procedure.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above requested information by **28 February 2025 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* concerning additional information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this statutory deadline will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any additional information submitted within the statutory deadline, it will not be possible to properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or a large amount of new information submitted at the last minute. ICOMOS would therefore be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation procedure.

Yours faithfully,

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Gwenaëlle Bourdin Director ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage UNESCO World Heritage Centre