



## **Native title determination to help protect sacred salt lake sites from mining**

Karinga Lakes native title holders are about to receive recognition of their right to protect their sacred sites from more damage from mining and exploration.

The Anangu [ARR – na – ngu] native title holders of the Karinga Lakes area, approximately 250 kilometres southwest of Alice Springs, will celebrate a native title consent determination on the morning of 5 April.

Judge Mordecai Bromberg of the Federal Court will hand down a determination covering more than 10,000 square kilometres of pastoral lease land including Warltunta [WAL – tun – ta], or Erldunda Station, Maratjura [MAH– rah – joo – rah], or Lyndavale Station, and Tjulu [JOO – loo], or Curtin Springs Station.

The native title holders asked the Central Land Council in 2016 to lodge the Karinga Lakes claim because they want to protect the culturally and environmentally sensitive salt lakes from potash mining by Verdant Minerals, who hold exploration licences overlapping the lakes.

Some of the songlines that traverse and create the lake system are part of a major men’s tjukurpa [JOO – koor – pah], or dreaming.

Senior native title holder David Wongaway said the lakes are sacred.

“The whole lake is important to old people. It is sacred to men and women.”

Anangu have cared for the area since time immemorial.

“I was born on the land ancestors slept on,” native title holder Cyril McKenzie, said.

“Aboriginal people, Anangu, look after the land. Salt lake is older than tjukurpa. Elders tell us this is where tjukurpa is. Follow tjukurpa.

Anangu and Lyndavale pastoralists brought damage to the lakes following substantial drilling and trench excavation to the attention of the CLC in 2013.

Following extensive anthropological and legal research, the land council helped the native title holders to file the claim in 2020.

The native title holders would like Verdant Minerals to respect their rights as nguraritja [NGOO – rah – rit – jah], or traditional owners, and leave the lakes alone.

“We want no more digging holes on the land,” Mr Wongaway said.

“Salt lake is damaged over the years with mining. Now we can say protect the land. It is part of the tjukurpa. It is connected,” Mr McKenzie added.

The native title holders are disappointed that the National Native Title Tribunal has to date failed to protect the lakes.



CLC native title manager Francine McCarthy said native title rights differ from land rights.

“The determination allows the native title holders to hunt, gather, conduct cultural activities and ceremonies in the area, as well as sell resources and negotiate commercial agreements, but unlike under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act they have no veto right.”

The native title holders will present Justice Bromberg with a clay vase created by native title holder Derek Thompson, of Ernabella Arts, which depicts wanampi [WA – nam – bee], meaning water snake or rainbow serpent. Wanampi is an important dreaming totem for the Karinga Lakes.

After the legal ceremony the native title holders will share a cake featuring a map of the lake systems with the pastoral lease holder families and the court staff, and take them on a visit to the edge of one of the lakes.

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