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Native title recognition for country Emily Kame Kngwarreye painted

The traditional owners of the Mount Skinner and Woodgreen stations are looking forward to the recognition of their native title rights.

Native title holders from eight groups are getting ready to celebrate a native title consent determination on 7 July at 11:00am at a homeland in the Utopia region, approximately 160 kilometres north of Mparntwe (Alice Springs).

Justice Burley of the Federal Court will travel to a site located seven kilometres north of Atneltyey [AHT-nel-cha] (Boundary Bore) to hand down a determination over an area covering more than 4,000 square kilometres.

The native title claim area includes the birthplace of one of Australia's most prominent artists, the late Emily Kame Kngwarreye.

Kngwarreye often painted her paternal grandfather's country of Alhalker [Ah-LAL-ka-rah] and the associated dreaming story of kame (pencil yam seed) – after which she was named.

Native title holders such as Kngwarreye's granddaughter Jennifer Purvis carry on this tradition.

"I draw yam seed dreaming," she said. "I draw line ones, sometimes dot painting. We will dance too."

She and other native title holders plan to celebrate the determination with traditional ceremonies.

"It's right. You can come look, we can dance for our country."

The determination recognises the native title holders' rights to access and live on their lands, conduct cultural activities and protect their sacred sites.

"It's important for us to go and look around, visit our country and take our kids to learn our culture and our foods — like go hunting, camping [and] look around water holes," explained native title holder and Central Land Council delegate Graham Long.

"We're living outside, but our sacred sites [are] inside. We can't do nothing cultural way," he said.

Native title holders have been fighting for recognition of native title on Mount Skinner Station to overcome locked gates and allow access to important places for men's business and sorry business.

Long hopes that following the native title determination he will be able to access his country. He wants to take his children out to his country and teach them important cultural customs. He says it's important that his kids to learn "both ways" – not just Western ways but traditional.

The native title holders have been waiting for these rights since the CLC filed their claim in 2023.

The Mount Skinner-Woodgreen determination includes a 20-square-kilometre portion adjoining the Utopia homelands where exclusive native title rights and interests apply and where native title holders alone have the right to possess and occupy the area and control access to it. The determination ceremony will take place within this portion of land.



In the remaining claim area, non-exclusive rights apply, meaning native title holders can access and stay on their lands, conduct cultural activities and protect their sacred sites.

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

“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.”

Native title holders hope the determination will allow them to work well with the station managers so they can access and look after sacred sites.

The Altyerr Anwekantherrenh [AL-tjira AH-nook-en-terr-ren-na] Aboriginal Corporation will be the prescribed body corporate managing and protecting these native title rights and interests.

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