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SPECIAL

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

INCLUSION OF A PLACE IN THE NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST

Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre Mine, Western Australia

I, Tony Burke, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, being satisfied that the place described in the Schedule has the National Heritage values specified in the Schedule, pursuant to section 324JJ of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, include it in the National Heritage List.

Dated 5/10/2010

[signed]

Tony Burke
Minister for Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities

SCHEDULE**STATE / TERRITORY**

Local Governments

Name

Location / Boundary

Criteria / Values

WESTERN AUSTRALIA**Cue Shire****Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre Mine:**

About 2000ha, 60km north-west of Cue. The precise location will not be disclosed as provided for under section 324Q of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Criterion	Values
(a) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history.	<p>The ochre mine at Wilgie Mia has outstanding heritage value to the nation because it demonstrates the importance of ochre in Aboriginal society. It is the largest traditional ochre mine in Australia with two large chambers and a number of tunnels dug by miners as they followed seams of ochre. Pole scaffolding with wooden platforms allowed the Wajarri to simultaneously mine seams at different levels allowing more ochre to be extracted. Over the course of its use, about 19,600 cubic metres of ochre and rock weighing around 40,000 tonnes were removed by Wajarri using heavy stone mauls, fire-hardened wooden wedges, shoring and scaffolding.</p> <p>Ochre from Wilgie Mia was traded over a large area. It provided most of the red ochre used by Aboriginal people in the western section of Western Australia and Flood says it was carried as far afield as to Queensland and the Nullarbor Plains in South Australia, 1,600 kilometres away (Morwood, 2002; Flood, 1999, Maynard in Wright, 1971). This is the most extensive pre-contact ochre trade network recorded in Australia.</p>
(b) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history	<p>Wilgie Mia has outstanding heritage value to the nation for its evidence of mining techniques that have not been recorded at other traditional Aboriginal mines and are an uncommon aspect of Australia's cultural history. These are the 'stop and pillar' technique used to provide increased safety when mining underground, and the use of pole scaffolding with wooden platforms to increase efficiency by allowing the mining of ochre from different heights in the rock face at the same time.</p>
(d) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (i) a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or (ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments.	<p>Wilgie Mia is of outstanding heritage value to the nation because of its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of traditional Aboriginal ochre mining. There is a creation story that links the different coloured ochres to different parts of the body of the creation being called the <i>marlu</i>, the red kangaroo. The prohibitions and rituals that underpinned traditional mining are known as is the role of the <i>Mondong</i>, malevolent spirits, in protecting the ochre. The knowledge about creation stories, guardian spirits and protective rituals is not matched at any other major Aboriginal ochre mine in Australia.</p> <p>Wilgie Mia is also the largest Aboriginal ochre mine in Australia and has all the features found in traditional Aboriginal mines: large open cut pits, excavated caverns and underground galleries that follow ochre seams. The galleries are supported by a 'stop and pillar' method of ground support as well as wooden shoring. In addition, the miners at Wilgie Mia used pole scaffolding with wooden platforms to allow them to mine ochre at different levels in the rock face.</p>

Criterion	Values
(f) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.	Wilgie Mia has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement during the last three thousand years in that it demonstrates Aboriginal people had developed 'stop and pillar' techniques to provide increased safety when mining underground and they used pole scaffolding with wooden platforms to allow them to extract ochre from different heights in the rock face at the same time.
(i) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance as part of Indigenous tradition..	Wilgie Mia has outstanding heritage value to the nation for its importance as part of a continuing Indigenous tradition. In the tradition, Wilgie Mia was created by an ancestral being, <i>marlu</i> , the red kangaroo. The tradition also relates the different coloured ochres found at the place to different parts of the <i>marlu's</i> body. This is the only known tradition to account for the different coloured ochres that occur within the one site. When compared with the other major mining sites in Australia, Wilgie Mia has the most complete records of the rituals and ceremonies associated with ochre mining in Australia. While other major Aboriginal mine sites are associated with creation beings, Wilgie Mia has the most diverse relationship with spirit beings. In particular, the role of the <i>Mondong</i> guardian spirits in regulating the behaviour of people is best exemplified at Wilgie Mia. Wilgie Mia is a men's site and access has been controlled through tradition and ritual. The red ochre at Wilgie Mia, the blood of <i>marlu</i> the red kangaroo, is particularly prized. It has a striking pinkish hue and silvery sheen which combine to produce a sacred colour of particular potency. Aboriginal men who still mine at Wilgie Mia describe the silvery hue of the mines' red ochre and how it glows in the dark. It is for these reasons that the red ochre from Wilgie Mia is an important part of Aboriginal ceremonial life, past and present. It is still traded for use in traditional ceremonies including important Law ceremonies.

For a description of any references quoted above, and more information on Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre Mine please search the Australian Heritage Database at <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl> using the name of the place.