

MEDIA STATEMENT

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GOLDFIELDS LAND & SEA COUNCIL
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Endorsing Aboriginal Occupation of Australia

The Goldfields Land and Sea Council ('GLSC') Board of Directors are excited by the study of Professor Eske Willerslev that establishes Aboriginal Australians as the population with the longest association with the land on which they still live today.

The GLSC Board understands that this research is important for many people from an academic perspective and continues to endorse the work. However, it notes that Aboriginal people, in the Goldfields, as elsewhere, always feel secure in their connection to this country, and the research does not alter this fact.

This research reinforces the significance of Aboriginal occupation of Australia, now shown to be even longer than previously thought. Aboriginal people feel exonerated in showing the broader community that they are by far the oldest continuous civilisation in the world.

It should also be noted that some Board members maintain that other versions of their creation story exist and are equally valid. For example, for many Aboriginal people the Wati Kutjara (two men) story explains the creation of Aboriginal people in the interior of Australia.

The GLSC Board expects that researchers dignify and respect Aboriginal people, and follow the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, by giving the relevant Aboriginal people the opportunity to provide their free, prior and informed consent on any research or other issues that affect their culture.

As Prof. Willerslev has done, all researchers must recognise that such samples have cultural values above and beyond their scientific values. His research proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Australia was occupied long prior to European settlement. It reinforces Aboriginal identification with the land, which is the essence of Aboriginal culture and existence.

Aboriginal people must now be recognised as the original people in this country and therefore have special rights as the first Australians.

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