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Minister for the Environment
Minister for Heritage

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MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE LAWS A STEP CLOSER

The NSW Government will start drafting new Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation aimed at creating a respectful and workable model for cultural heritage protection.

NSW Heritage Minister Mark Speakman said after three phases of consultation with more than 1000 responses, today's announcement brings NSW one step closer to having laws that better identify, celebrate and protect Aboriginal culture.

"There is overwhelming support for laws that better respect our rich, living Aboriginal culture, such as places, stories, songlines and cultural practices," Mr Speakman said.

"The draft legislation will directly involve Aboriginal people in decision making on cultural heritage and give greater certainty to proponents through clearer regulatory processes. The current legal framework sits inappropriately in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*.

"This is an opportunity for a win-win: greater self-determination and empowerment of Aboriginal people, and better identification and decision making around cultural heritage."

Clear principles will frame a clearer system for economic and social development:

- Aboriginal people will determine who speaks for Country
- Communities will be supported to identify and protect important sites, connections, and practices
- Aboriginal communities will be able to negotiate cultural heritage outcomes with proponents
- A new statewide body of Aboriginal people will oversee the new system

NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Leslie Williams said the Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation would complement proposed legislation to protect Aboriginal languages.

"The Government recognises that Aboriginal culture and language are intrinsic to the identity of Aboriginal people and to the cultural heritage of all people in NSW. We are committed to enhancing the protection of Aboriginal culture and language, and to ensuring Aboriginal people are consulted every step of the way," Mrs Williams said.

Draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage legislation is expected to be open for public comment in the first half of 2017. Consultation will be as culturally appropriate and accessible as possible.

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