

Western Australia passes bill to recognise Aboriginal people

The legislation was backed by all parties and will give Indigenous people ‘security as to knowing who they are and how they sit with policies’



Aboriginal children play on a car near the mining town of Karratha in Western Australia.
Photograph: Greg Wood/AFP/Getty Images

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A bill to officially recognise Aboriginal people in the West Australian constitution has passed through state parliament.

The Recognition of Aboriginal People bill, tabled by Kimberley Labor MP Josie Farrer, amends the WA constitution to recognise indigenous people as the first people and custodians of the state.

The bill received bipartisan support and will now be forwarded to the governor for royal assent.

Farrer told reporters she was elated that the bill had passed, adding it would give Aboriginal people a platform to negotiate on issues.

“It gives them that security as to knowing who they are and how they sit with a lot of the policies in this country,” she said.

Opposition Aboriginal affairs spokesman Ben Wyatt said WA had some “unfinished business” with its constitution.

“Aboriginal people are mentioned in our constitution, but in a very negative, derogatory way,” he said.

“This is an important constitutional step to simply acknowledge that when that legislation passed 126 years ago, that it had a big flaw and that was to not acknowledge the traditional owners.”

Premier Colin Barnett said the recognition was long overdue.