

Media release

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NNTC WELCOMES JUUKAN INTERIM REPORT, CALLS FOR COMPENSATION TO PKKP

The National Native Title Council (NNTC) has welcomed the senate inquiry's interim report into the Juukan Gorge destruction, handed down yesterday, and called for Rio Tinto to pay compensation to the PKKP people.

The interim report, titled 'Never Again', condemns Rio Tinto, and the WA and Federal governments, whose legislative failings enabled the enormous imbalance of power between mining companies and Traditional Owners that led to the catastrophe.

The report urges Rio Tinto to make a number of commitments, including reviews into all agreements with Traditional Owners, a moratorium on existing s18 approvals to destroy cultural heritage and the lifting of gag clauses.

Responding to the report, NNTC CEO Jamie Lowe stated:

"The NNTC welcomes this report and its recommendations, including the strength of its language and intent in its absolute condemnation of Rio and the WA and Federal governments."

"We agree with the committee in its view that both State and Federal legislation failed the PKKP. The critical next step will be implementation of legislation at the State and Federal levels to ensure Traditional Owners are the ultimate decision makers and have control of their own cultural heritage."

"Compensation to the PKKP must go beyond restoring the site. It should be calculated with reference to the native title compensation precedent set by the High Court last year, which spoke to economic loss and cultural loss for the community. It's incredible to imagine what such a figure would be for a 46,000-year-old site of world heritage significance. That figure should go far beyond the \$135 million price tag Rio put on the iron ore when it bombed Juukan Gorge."

"Any restitution or remediation work Rio Tinto undertakes in relation to Juukan Gorge, as recommended in the report, is the absolute bare minimum they should be doing. It's highly doubtful they would undertake any of these works if they were not in the public spotlight. Cultural change in such companies is fanciful; the mining sector cannot be trusted to self-regulate. It is the responsibility of Federal and State governments to implement strong cultural heritage laws.

For more information please contact Megan Giles – megan.giles@nntc.com.au or 0433 028 567

Note to Editors: Jamie Lowe is CEO of the National Native Title Council and a Djab Wurrung Gunditjmarra man. He is also an elected representative on the Victorian Treaty Assembly.