

Attention: News Editor/Chief of Staff

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FMG Eliwana rail doubt as Commonwealth intervenes in fight to preserve Aboriginal heritage dating back to Ice Age

- A Melbourne-based Barrister has been appointed as a reporter to prepare a information related to an application to protect 23,000 year-old Aboriginal heritage
- The reporter was appointed by the Federal Minister for the Environment and Energy, and will advise the Minister as to whether FMG can build the railway required to support its \$1.5B Eliwana mine
- The action follows an application from Pilbara Traditional Owners seeking an emergency declaration to protect the area after the Western Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs provided consent for its destruction without considering important site information

A Melbourne-based Barrister has been appointed by the Federal Minister for the Environment and Energy to prepare a report into the cultural and heritage significance of an area known as Spear Hill, near Karijini National Park in the central Pilbara.

His report will inform the Minister's decision on whether to allow the destruction of the area to facilitate the construction of a railway required to support future FMG mining operations.

The announcement follows the release of a report that evidences the cultural heritage significance of the sites under threat, and includes radiocarbon results that prove that the area has been intensively used and occupied by Ancestral Guruma people for a minimum of 23,000 years.

Wintawari Guruma Aboriginal Corporation Chairman Glen Camille said that the Commonwealth application was made after the Western Australian Government outsourced their responsibility to protect unique Aboriginal heritage to FMG.

"The Western Australian Government - having made a premature, ill-informed and irresponsible decision to approve the destruction of 50 sites within this sacred area without considering information from Traditional Owners - have essentially outsourced responsibility to protect the area to FMG," he said.

"FMG's current expansion to facilitate Eliwana must have due consideration for our cultural heritage places and our customs and traditions."

"We have met with FMG a number of times asking them to realign less than 2% of the planned railway to avoid an area of unique significance to the Eastern Guruma people. To date, our requests have been rejected, despite compelling evidence demonstrating the significance of the area."

"We are hoping that the appointment of a new CEO, Elizabeth Gaines, may result in a change to the way FMG approach aboriginal heritage issues.

“Without intervention, we could be just months away from the destruction of rock shelters that house artefacts that prove consistent use for at least 23,000 years. We could be just months away from the destruction of wall niches that have been used as burial places for 23,000 years. And we could be months away from a railway being constructed less than 100 meters from a site with 500 rock art panels that are at least 5,000 years old.”

“With FMG’s refusal to ‘go-around’, we were left with no choice but to seek this Commonwealth intervention and put the issues through a process that is fair, legitimate, honest and open.”

“This fairness has been denied to us by the West Australian Government.”

The State Minister, in recently announcing a review of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*, identified aboriginal heritage as a State asset of significant importance that needed to be preserved for current and future generations.”

However in this case, it’s not the Act that has let us down, it’s the competence and attitude of the decision makers within Government that has put this important heritage area under threat.”

The invitation to make representations to the reporter will close on 5 April 2018.

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NOTE: 4k-resolution vision is available, and includes:

- Landscapes and drone vision
- Comments from Traditional Owners
- Footage of ancient rock art, never before filmed and rarely viewed.

On request.