



## **WA:Miner destroys more than a hundred Aboriginal sites**

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### **Body**

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Archaeologists working for **Fortescue** and an Indigenous group they're fighting in court have accused the mining giant of destroying more than a hundred heritage sites.

For 15 years, the Yindjibarndi people have been battling iron ore miner **Fortescue** Metals Group, the company founded by billionaire Andrew Forrest.

Some traditional owners in Western Australia's northwest say the rifts between family and community members triggered by the dispute may never heal.

Among the stoushes is a long-running compensation fight, which briefly returned to the Federal Court last week.

An expert report accepted into evidence found 249 sites within the mine footprint were protected under the State Aboriginal Heritage Act, which means they can be destroyed or damaged.

More than half of those sites, where humans were living 40,000-45,000 years ago, have been destroyed.

The joint report was produced by Yindjibarndi Ngurra Aboriginal Corporation's archaeologists Peter Veth and Caroline Bird, and **Fortescue**'s expert Douglas Williams.

The trio agreed that a more detailed investigation could have been done to mitigate the loss of some sites.

The report also found that **Fortescue** might have been able to exploit weaknesses in the WA government's administration of Aboriginal heritage.

Yindjibarndi Ngurra Aboriginal Corporation is suing **Fortescue** and the WA government for mining at the Solomon Hub since 2013 without consent.

About 75 per cent of the mine's 400 square kilometre footprint, an area the size of Darwin, extends across the Yindjibarndi native title determination area.

**Fortescue** said it was committed to seeing the court case settled so all the Yindjibarndi people could benefit.

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"**Fortescue** has offered compensation to the Yindjibarndi people in the past and we continue to be ready to settle this by paying compensation," a spokeswoman said.

"**Fortescue** pays financial compensation as part of all seven of our native title agreements."  
The Solomon Hub in the Hamersley Ranges is 60km north of Tom Price in the Pilbara.

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