



[WA:Community, Country 'ruptured' over iron ore mine damage](#)

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Body

Traditional Owners are seeking \$1.8 billion in compensation from iron ore miner **Fortescue** Metals Group over economic and cultural loss.

Yindjibarndi Ngurra Aboriginal Corporation wants \$1 billion for cultural damage, while \$678 million is being sought for economic loss, according to documents filed to the Federal Court.

In their closing submission, lawyers for the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation said the loss of Country as a consequence of **Fortescue**'s Solomon Mine Hub in the Pilbara "is equated to a suffocation affecting country and individuals as hollowness and emptiness".

"The fact that the Yindjibarndi are getting nothing for their Ngurra (Country) from this manjangu (stranger) is a cause of deep spiritual loss," Yindjibarndi lawyer Justin Edwards told the court on Wednesday.

The total number of sites that have been damaged or destroyed is in excess of 285, according to Yindjibarndi's closing submissions.

On Monday, Yindjibarndi lawyer Vance Hughston said cultural sites must have an economic value, asking how much it was worth for a nation to have sites dating back tens of thousand of years.

"They're the sort of things that people say are priceless," Mr Hughston said.

The Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation is also seeking compensation for specific destruction of sites and for the cost of healing the trauma caused by social disruption.

Fortescue began mining at the Solomon hub in the Pilbara in 2013 without agreement from the Aboriginal corporation, instead dealing with a breakaway group.

Fortescue and the Yindjibarndi attempted to negotiate a Land Use Agreement for the Solomon Mine Hub, but no agreement was ever reached.

Division arose among Yindjibarndi people, including in relationship to the negotiations with **Fortescue**, the submission said, resulting in the formation of Wiru-Murra Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation.

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"Yindjibarndi people divided publicly in August 2010 over a Land Access Agreement. They have remained divided since then," Yindjibarndi's submissions says.

On Wednesday, Mr Edwards described the division as a "rupture" in the community, which had impacted the practice of cultural ceremony.

"They haven't been done for years now, or been done for years as a group of Yindjibarndi people, as a community," he said.

"The significance of those ceremonies is not just a personal significance, it's a significance, Your Honour, for the Country."

"The rupture in this community can be properly understood as a rupture in Country when that spiritual relationship is fully understood."

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