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PRESS RELEASE 12 July 2011

YINDJIBARNDI ABORIGINAL CORPORATION, Roebourne, WA

Highest NAIDOC honour a resounding vote of confidence in most senior Yindjibarndi leader and knowledge carrier, Ned Cheedy

Yindjibarndi elder, 105 year old Ned Cheedy of Roebourne, was awarded the most prestigious NAIDOC prize, the Lifetime Achievement Award, on Friday night at the national NAIDOC awards in Sydney. His daughters Jane and Marion accepted the award on his behalf to a standing ovation, and with tears of joy.

Yindjibarndi people who have been learning about the foundations of their cultural and spiritual being at his side, have known for a long time that Ned is a national treasure. But as much as Yindjibarndi rejoice Ned's great honour, the grim reality Ned and his people must face after the celebrations, is that Fortescue Metals Group (FMG) have pegged over half their country; and that since Yindjibarndi rejected the unjust and punitive terms of their Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA), FMG have provoked a damaging and distressing split in the Yindjibarndi community.

PRESS RELEASES & NEWSLETTERS: http://yindjibarndi.org.au/yindjibarndi/?page_id=1102
VIDEO & PRESS COVERAGE: http://yindjibarndi.org.au/yindjibarndi/?page_id=1024

Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (YAC) CEO, Michael Woodley, said the whole community of Roebourne was thrilled by this honour for Ned. "We are so proud of his achievement, and thankful for his life and his wisdom. This means a lot, especially in these times when FMG continues to disrespect Yindjibarndi as they begin developing the Solomon Hub without the consent of Ned and his people. The greatest award this country could give Ned would be to step in, and bring some respect and justice to the way this company is dealing with us."

Ned is the most senior claimant now fighting for native title to the Yindjibarndi #1 Claim – which lies under the epicentre of FMG's Solomon Hub – and it is his knowledge that crowns Yindjibarndi evidence of connection to this country and substantiates their claim for exclusive possession.

Ned's leadership and counsel has been the cornerstone of the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation's stand against FMG's 'divide and conquer' drive to quash all objections to their Solomon Hub project. However, it is a despairing and withering fight that has troubled his old age.

In mid-June, and against the strong objections of Ned Cheedy, his four fellow applicants and the body of the broader claim group, the NNTT, in the determination of Justice Daniel O'Dea, decided in favour of FMG and the State that Yindjibarndi country under the Solomon Hub is of little value and so should be given over to yet another mining lease and two more exploration leases. (A decision YAC will seek to appeal to the Federal Court.)

ODEA DETERMINATION NNTT 17-6-11: <http://yindjibarndi.org.au/yindjibarndi/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/ODEa-17-6-11-Final-determination.pdf>

A second blow came with Minister Peter Collier's granting of Section 18 consent to FMG to allow full bore mining in FMG's Firetail deposit. Although conditions are attached, DIA's track record gives Yindjibarndi no confidence these will be properly enforced, thus effectively giving FMG a green light to obliterate thousands of hectares of this country, and all but a token of the Yindjibarndi cultural inheritance therein.

SECTION 18 CONSENT FIRETAIL 30-06-11: http://yindjibarndi.org.au/yindjibarndi/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/110704_LF-DIA_s18-consent-M47_1413-Firetail.pdf

It is a great sadness for Ned that a faction of his own people – the Wirlumurra – including members of his extended family, have assisted FMG in these tragic outcomes by siding with Andrew Forrest and FMG against the long term interests of the Yindjibarndi people. Earlier in the year these same Wirlumurra denied Ned Cheedy space to speak at the infamous 16 March ‘Great Native Title Swindle’ meeting, and drowned out his pleas with a clamour demanding assent to an immediate deal with FMG.

VIDEO: FMG’S GREAT NATIVE TITLE SWINDLE

Part 1: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6w_fB7e0WCY&feature=player_embedded

Part 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xa1eX_E0p8&feature=player_embedded

FMG have been doing all they can to drive a wedge deeper into the Yindjibarndi community by paying all the legal and professional costs of this splinter group who are willing to sign over to them Yindjibarndi rights in both the Yindjibarndi native title determination and claim areas; and who are willing to oppose and harass by vexatious litigation the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation – the last obstacle standing between FMG and a ‘bucket load of extinguishment’ in the Solomon Hub.

Most cruelly, FMG is subsidising moves by the Wirlumurra faction to remove Ned Cheedy and his four co-applicants from the Claim, if they hold to their opposition of FMG’s current Indigenous Land Use Agreement.

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2011: <http://yindjibarndi.org.au/yindjibarndi/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/YAC-Newsletter2-March-2011.pdf>

FLYER DECEMBER 2010: <http://yindjibarndi.org.au/yindjibarndi/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/The-Real-Agenda-email.pdf>

In his determination of the original Yindjibarndi native title claim, Justice Nicholson stated that the impacts of *“the influences which European settlement has brought [...] have brought them [the Yindjibarndi] towards the cusp of the moment when their connection to [...] their lands through their traditional law and custom could be washed away by the tide of history. From the evidence I do not consider that time has yet arrived.”*

With the *influences* of FMG and Andrew Forrest in the lands and the community of the Yindjibarndi, their connection to their lands and their grip on survival as a society risks being pushed over the cusp, and being *washed away...* by ‘the tide of FMG’.

Ned Cheedy and his people have lost all faith in FMG to meet their obligations under so-called ‘corporate social responsibility’, and in the Federal and State laws that have utterly failed to safeguard Yindjibarndi heritage and culture against the assault of Fortescue Metals Group.

FMG and the State should be clear, the agreement as it is currently proposed by FMG and Wirlumurra will never be signed by Ned Cheedy or his four co-applicants, because the body of the Yindjibarndi people do not support it.

Inspired by Ned Cheedy and his deep commitment to the glory of Yindjibarndi country and ‘being’, the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation have vowed to never give up on a just outcome for the Yindjibarndi people.

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For background & research materials please visit:

www.yindjibarndi.org.au

For deeper insight into Yindjibarndi society, and particularly Ned Cheedy’s life and knowledge, see the just released video:

Wanggangarra... that which gives life.

<http://www.isuma.tv/hi/%E1%90%83%E1%93%84%E1%92%83%E1%91%8E%E1%91%90%E1%91%A6/yindjibarndi/wanggangarra-that-which-gives-life>

or

<http://www.engagemedia.org/Members/mardawud/videos/wanggangarra...-that-which-gives-life/view>