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362 Yaamba Road
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26 June 2020

Hon Warren Entsch MP
PO Box 14
Bungalow Qld 4870

To whom it may concern,

We, the Connecting Cultures Student Committee at Emmaus College Rockhampton, would like to voice our concern over the tragedy of the irreversible destruction of the Juukan Gorge's Aboriginal shelters in Western Australia. This was carried out by the Rio Tinto Mining company even though the company knew the significance of this site. ¹ These shelters are nine-times older than Stonehenge, 23-times older than the Colosseum and 75-times older than Machu Picchu.² The caves were the only inland site in Australia to show evidence of continual human occupation through the last Ice Age.³

Experts in the field of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* have identified that the laws which are supposed to protect aboriginal heritage and culture are not fit for purpose. The destruction of the Puutu Kuntjira people's sacred sites is evidence of the flaws in these laws.

Australian laws do not encourage mega companies, such as Rio Tinto, to act in the interest of Aboriginal heritage, as the punishments given are no more than a slap on the wrist for these huge corporations.

We propose that you must act in your role as a member of parliament to:

- strengthen the laws to protect Aboriginal sacred sites by listening to Aboriginal people and acting according to their wishes, and
- constructing punishments that hold big companies accountable, and implement financial consequences that will actually deter bad practice by companies that could lead to further destruction of sacred sites.⁴

Yours Sincerely,

Tahlia Parish
On behalf of Emmaus College Connecting Cultures Committee

¹ <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/rio-tinto-knew-of-46-000-year-old-pilbara-site-s-significance-as-recently-as-march-traditional-owners-say-20200530-p54xyt.html>

² https://twitter.com/MrKRudd?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

³ <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/rio-tinto-knew-of-46-000-year-old-pilbara-site-s-significance-as-recently-as-march-traditional-owners-say-20200530-p54xyt.html>

⁴ <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/land/native-title-issues-problems>