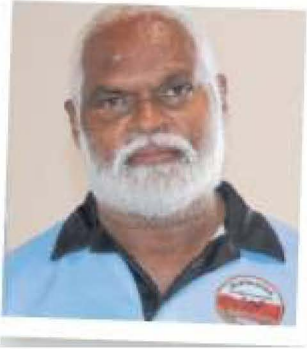


Aboriginal group fears backlash from miners



A native title group says it has a “genuine fear” that speaking out about issues such as Rio Tinto’s destruction of ancient Aboriginal caves in the Pilbara will have financial repercussions.

Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation chief executive Peter Jeffries told an inquiry into the destruction of the sacred Juukan Gorge site that the group had no commercial agreements with miners and relied on funding from industry partners.

“I would also like the put on notice that I stand here today ... that there is a real fear genuine fear that there will be financial repercussions for MAC . . . despite our responsibility to manage Murujuga, our ability to do so is increasingly linked to the internal approval processes of our proponents,” he said.

“We have funding applications in process that may become stalled as a result of what I’ll say here today — this is a single, small example of the power mining companies build over Aboriginal corporations.” Mr Jeffries, pictured, said Aboriginal people could not rely on international outrage to force miners to act appropriately. “We have a responsibility to look after the country,” he said. “It is our responsibility to take seriously and it is time all proponents take that seriously, too.”

Rangi Hirini

The West Australian
Tuesday, 03.11.2020 p20