



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LAPFF Backs Findings of Interim Report on Rio Tinto and Juukan Gorge

Forum Believes Many Findings Relevant to Entire Mining Industry

London 14.00 (BST) LAPFF welcomes the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry interim report investigating Rio Tinto's destruction of Juukan Gorge in Western Australia. The report, issued yesterday, states that Rio Tinto knew what it was doing at Juukan Gorge and is adamant that this set of events must not be repeated, a sentiment with which the Forum concurs. To this end, the report sets out seven overarching recommendations to a range of stakeholders and eight sub-recommendations for Rio Tinto, with one such recommendation extending to all mining and exploration companies.

The Forum is pleased to see the recommendations include that Rio Tinto ensure a full reconstruction of the Juukan Gorge rock shelters and commit to a permanent moratorium on mining in Juukan Gorge in meaningful negotiation with the affected Traditional Owners.

LAPFF also supports the heavy emphasis in the report on certain means of rectifying the situation, such as ensuring free prior and informed consent with Indigenous communities, an independent review of all agreements with Traditional Owners, and the need for equality of power between parties in the process of negotiating contracts and agreements.

Cllr Doug McMurdo, Chair of Local Authority Pension Fund Forum, said: "It is fitting that this report has been issued just in time for Human Rights Day. The interim report stated, and I quote, that Rio Tinto has a 'corporate culture which prioritised commercial gain over the kind of meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners that should form a critical part of the social license to operate.' Unfortunately, this observation matches what I have heard through the Forum's engagement with communities affected by Rio Tinto operations in the US, Mongolia, and Australia, and it concerns me greatly.

However, I would also second the report finding that this concern extends to the mining industry more broadly. For example, a shareholder resolution proposed to BHP on cultural heritage for the 2020 AGM requested many



measures similar to those found in this interim report, but the company rebuffed the recommendations and the resolution.

In my experience, the entire industry is tone deaf on the rights of affected community members, and this must change now. Mining companies must implement corporate governance processes that effectively incorporate input from affected communities, not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because failure to do so negatively affects the operation and prospects of the companies in which we invest. This is a financial imperative.'

ENDS>

10 December 2020

For further information:

Lara Blecher, Engagement Services Manager
PIRC Ltd, (research and engagement partner to LAPFF)
Tel: 020 7247 2323 Email: lara.blecher@pirc.co.uk

About the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum: The Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF) is a voluntary association of 82 public sector pension funds and seven pools based in the UK with combined assets of over £300 billion. It exists to 'promote the long-term investment interests of local authority pension funds, and to maximise their influence as shareholders to promote corporate responsibility and high standards of corporate governance amongst the companies in which they invest.'
PIRC is the Research and Engagement partner to the Forum @lapfforum <https://lapfforum.org/>.