

Rock art must stay where it is, says Aboriginal group

By COURTNEY BERTLING

A WEST Pilbara Aboriginal group says it has been forced to draw a "line in the sand" to prevent resource developers moving more precious rock art from its ancient setting.

The Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo group held its Annual General meeting at Point Samson Hall on June 28. The meeting was attended by a wide cross-section of members, the group's legal team, accountants and anthropologist.

The meeting resolved to continue the group's opposition to the desecration and destruction of their culture caused by removal of ancient rock engravings on the Burrup Peninsula and elsewhere in the group's traditional lands to make way for industrial development.

Local elder and spokesperson Wilfred Hicks said this destruction of the group's culture had gone too far already.

"At first the Dampier Port Authority came and asked us to help them move five or six engraved boulders", he said.

"We agreed, as that didn't seem much.

"Then the East-West Services Corridor was built and we agreed to help move another dozen or so engravings for the State Government.

"Then Woodside came to us and we agreed to allow them to move some engravings in their Pluto Area A.

"Then they came back with Pluto Area B and wanted to move more than 200.

"That's when we drew the line in the sand.

"The whole issue had got out of hand."

He said Government and developers had been taking advantage of the group, exploiting the group's desire not to be seen hindering development.

"But our people are dying and falling ill because of this wanton destruction of our history, our ancestor's legacy and our culture," Mr Hicks said.

"It simply has to stop, so we are saying no more rock art movement.

"Make no mistake about it, movement means destruction.

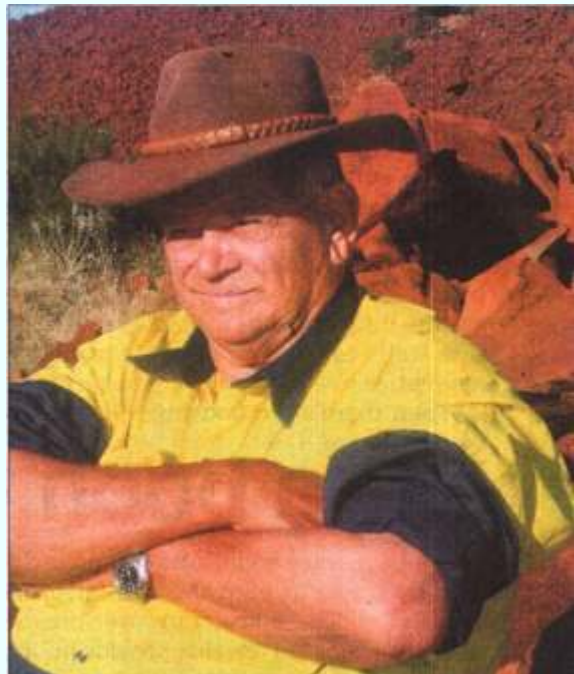
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"You cannot 'salvage' the spirits of our land," Mr Hicks said.

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Wilfred Hicks, from the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo Aboriginal group, says the removal of rock art by resource developers has gone too far.