STATEMENT FROM WATI LAW COUNCIL

(Senior Lawmen of the Pilbara)

On 7 September 2020, the West Australian newspaper published an article which seemed to suggest that the traditional owners, the Banjima peoples, supported BHP plans to expand its South Flank operation. But do they? The way the article was written, it certainly appeared to be the case.

On closer examination of the article, the article is based on the views of one senior elder, Mr Tucker, who did not want BHP to pause operations. The reasoning behind his support for the proposal was that he thought it would mean the creation of up to 2,500 jobs during construction and a further 600 jobs once operational for his people. It may, but at what price for First Nations peoples?

It is a pity that the article did not portray the views of more than one indigenous person. In particular the Wati Council which is made up of groups of Indigenous Law Carriers in the Pilbara from various language and skin groups, who do not support the extension of mining.

In addition, the WATI Council does not support the West Australian Government or mining companies in destroying culturally significant heritage sites. They want a moratorium on all mining activities that disturb or destroy spiritual and sacred sites. There will be no excuses for cultural genocide in the Pilbara!!

Signed by Teddy Biljabu,

Wati Council Chairperson