

THE small community of Groote Eylandt hasn't been far from the news after the former public officer of Groote Eylandt **Aboriginal** Trust, Rosalie Lalara, was accused of squandering hundreds of thousands of royalty money.

A total of \$34 million disappeared from the GEAT coffers between 2010 and 2012, leaving just \$400,000 remaining in the account.

Ms Lalara had earlier pleaded guilty to misappropriating \$500,000 and was remanded in custody to await sentencing.

However, in a spectacular twist last week Ms Lalara sacked her lawyer moments before the start of the hearing before NT Supreme Court judge Graham Hiley.

Following the sacking, the **Aboriginal** sovereignty movement disrupted the trial with claims the judge and prosecutor were guilty of "treason" and the defendant should be released as she misused funds to protect against witchcraft.

In a statement tendered in court and purporting to represent the views of defendant Rosalie Lalara, Original Sovereign Tribal Federation spokesman **David Cole** said she and other directors had misused Groote Eylandt **Aboriginal** Trust funds to avoid "having pouri-pouri used against them (or being 'sung') to make them ill or kill them.

"'Singing' is a very real element of our religious law and is the method by which we invoke the spirits to make others ill or to take their lives," the statement said. Groote Eylandt earns millions each year in royalties from the nearby South 32 manganese mine, but infrastructure, housing and education is below par.

#### CITATION (AGLC STYLE)

'Witchcraft claims derail trial over missing Aboriginal funds', *Sunday Territorian* (online), 8 Nov 2015 <<https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/apps/news/document-view?p=AUNB&docref=news/15903738DAB66100>>