

## **Mirarr welcome uranium inquiry**

**20 JUNE 2002**

The Mirarr People, Traditional Owners of land subject to the Ranger and Jabiluka uranium operations in Kakadu, today welcomed the successful motion of the Senate for an inquiry into environmental monitoring and reporting in the Australian uranium industry. Both Ranger and Jabiluka have this year been plagued by persistent environmental management problems and will be investigated by the Senate environment committee.

"This is a recognition that at Ranger and Jabiluka we have a fundamentally flawed regulatory regime that has seen repeated environmental failures at both operations," said Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation Executive Officer Andy Ralph.

The Ranger and Jabiluka operations are subject to both Commonwealth and Northern Territory legislation, with the Northern Territory Government responsible for day-to-day regulation. The role of the Commonwealth, however, will be the primary focus of the inquiry.

"Uranium is a nationally prescribed mineral and Kakadu is a World Heritage listed national park for which the Commonwealth has specific domestic and international obligations. Given its clearly inadequate response to this year's events the Commonwealth Office of the Supervising Scientist does not at present enjoy the confidence of the Traditional Owners," Mr Ralph said.

The inquiry follows persistent reports this year of environmental mismanagement at both Ranger and Jabiluka. These have included delayed reporting of elevated uranium levels at Jabiluka, the incorrect placement of ore at Ranger (which resulted in contamination of the nearby Corridor Creek system) and un-sourced extremely high levels of uranium at Ranger. In April a former senior chemist from Ranger released allegations of serious environmental mismanagement at the mine site, including claims of elevated uranium levels within Kakadu National Park.

Northern Territory ALP Senator Trish Crossin moved for the inquiry and received the support of both the Democrats and Greens. Democrats Senator Lyn Allison will chair the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and Arts References Committee, which will report on 5 December 2002.

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

That the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee inquire into and report on the regulatory, monitoring and reporting regimes that govern environmental performance at the Ranger and Jabiluka uranium operations in the Northern Territory and the Beverley and

Honeymoon in situ leach operations in South Australia, with particular reference to:

- the adequacy, effectiveness and performance of existing monitoring and reporting regimes and regulations;
- the adequacy and effectiveness of those Commonwealth agencies responsible for the oversight and implementation of these regimes and
- a review of Commonwealth responsibilities and mechanisms to realise improved environmental performance and transparency of reporting.