

GUNDJEIHMI

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Media Statement

8 January 2021

End of mining operations at Ranger Uranium Mine

The Mirarr Traditional Owners welcome the conclusion today of uranium mining on their country with the end of processing at the Ranger Uranium Mine adjacent to Kakadu National Park. The ending of active operations comes some 40 years after the Commonwealth government, which originally owned 50% of the mine, imposed uranium mining on traditional owners.

The CEO of the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, representing the Mirarr, Justin O'Brien, said it is now timely for a reckoning of the commitments made by the Commonwealth and to improve regulatory arrangements.

"It is timely today to assess the promises made by the Commonwealth to the Aboriginal community when mining was imposed in Kakadu. The government of the day overruled universal Aboriginal opposition and imposed a mine it half-owned. Now is the time to redress such past injustice and the inadequacies in the regulation of Ranger's rehabilitation and, beyond that, to assess the administrative arrangements imposed by the Commonwealth on Kakadu National Park in the 1980s," Mr O'Brien said.

The Mirarr have secured the support of Rio Tinto majority-owned Energy Resources of Australia for an extension to the currently inadequate five-year period of rehabilitation at Ranger. The traditional owners have also recently called on the federal government to amend the *Atomic Energy Act* to allow for this extension. It is understood that draft amendments are in progress.

"The world is watching Australia and Rio Tinto to ensure that an accountable and effective rehabilitation regime is put in place to restore the Ranger site to the surrounding World Heritage listed national park. With its cultural and natural Outstanding Universal Values and the fate of Aboriginal communities downstream of the mine in the balance the stakes could not be higher," Mr O'Brien said.

Ultimately, the rehabilitation of the mine site is the responsibility of the Commonwealth government, which made a raft of assurances when mining was imposed on Kakadu. These included an active Commonwealth and Indigenous role in the management of the township of Jabiru and the promise of Indigenous social benefit through the creation of the national park.

"The Commonwealth has abandoned its promises on both its role in actively managing Jabiru and in providing Aboriginal people with social benefits from the park's administrative arrangements. Mirarr traditional owners and other local Aboriginal people are sorely disappointed with this historical breach of trust. These matters should now be reviewed and remedied," Mr O'Brien said.

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