

GUNDJEIHMI

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Media Statement – 9 April 2022

Mirarr Traditional Owners have welcomed statements from mining giant Rio Tinto about the future of the controversial Ranger and Jabiluka sites within the World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park in Australia's Northern Territory.

Supporters of Mirarr attended Rio Tinto's London AGM last night Australian time and called on the company to ensure Kakadu is not left with a toxic radioactive legacy given the dramatic increases in the cost and timeframe needed for the rehabilitation of the decommissioned Ranger uranium mine.

Rio Tinto restated its commitment to a comprehensive clean up at Ranger in line with statements at multiple AGMs over the past decade.

"We are happy to hear the commitment from outgoing chair Simon Thompson that Rio Tinto will not walk away from its responsibilities at Kakadu. Mirarr never wanted this mine on our country and we do not want to be left with the poison after it closes" said Mirarr Senior Traditional Owner Yvonne Margarula

The Ranger and Jabiluka uranium mine sites are of immense cultural heritage significance to the Mirarr and the international community. The two sites are also completely surrounded by the World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park.

In addition to seeking assurance about the Ranger clean up, the Mirarr supporters in London also raised the issue of the future of the Jabiluka site at today's meeting.

In response to board member Ben Wyatt's comments Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation CEO Justin O'Brien said:

"In recent company statements there is reference to the possible "development or sale" of the Jabiluka deposit. This is of huge concern to us, that place must be permanently protected from mining.

"We are heartened that Rio Tinto has reiterated its support for the wishes of the Mirarr that the Jabiluka site will never be developed without the consent of the Mirarr. We welcome the company's clear acknowledgement that clear acknowledgement that there is no consent from Mirarr for mining at Jabiluka" Mr O'Brien concluded.

For further information and photos contact Kirsten Blair on 0412 853 641

Background notes on Rio Tinto and Kakadu uranium mining

- Rio Tinto owns an 86.33% controlling interest in Australian uranium miner Energy Resources of Australia (ERA)
- ERA has operated the Ranger uranium mine on Mirarr country for the past four decades
- Mining at Ranger has ended, rehabilitation of the site is now ERA's primary focus
- ERA is legally required to return the Ranger site to a standard where the site is suitable for inclusion in the surrounding Kakadu World Heritage area at the end of mining
- potential for long-term negative impacts from uranium has been of immense concern to Mirarr since before the mine was built
- In February 2022 ERA announced the cost and the timeframe for the rehabilitation of Ranger have been seriously underestimated. Clean-up cost has doubled from previous forecasts to a range from \$1.6 billion to \$2.2 billion
- Following that announcement Mirarr senior Traditional Owner Yvonne Margarula welcomed greater certainty of the true cost of Ranger's clean-up and reiterated the need for both the mining company and the Australian Government to honour their Kakadu commitments
- The Ranger mine and Jabiluka project sites are of enormous cultural heritage significance to the Mirarr Traditional Owners
- Mirarr led a successful international "Stop Jabiluka Mine" campaign to protect their country from mining during the 1990s-2000s. This culminated in:
 - no uranium exported from Jabiluka
 - mining works being reversed, with mineralised ore returned underground
 - extensive rehabilitation works at the site
 - a Long Term Care and Maintenance Agreement between Mirarr and Rio Tinto committing the mining company to honour the wishes of the Mirarr