

GUNDJEIHMI

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Media Statement – 28 July 2022

Jabiluka deposit will never be mined

The Mirarr traditional owners today welcomed the renewed commitment from Rio Tinto to the comprehensive rehabilitation of the Ranger uranium mine at Kakadu and the company's acknowledgement of the long-standing Mirarr opposition to the development of the adjacent Jabiluka deposit. The operating company, Energy Resources of Australia, has today announced that rehabilitation works may be suspended or slowed pending an independent valuation to determine the fair value of the company.

Rio Tinto is the majority owner of ERA, which mined uranium at Ranger on Mirarr country from 1980 to 2021. In February, ERA publicly confirmed that the cost and timeline for rehabilitation of Ranger have been massively underestimated.

In half-yearly results released in London yesterday, Rio Tinto highlighted its position on the terms of any funding solution, including acknowledgment of, "the Mirarr People's publicly stated position on the future development of Jabiluka".

"All talk about mining at Jabiluka is wrong. It must stop," the Mirarr senior traditional owner Yvonne Margarula said today. "That place is *Djang* [sacred] for us – it will never be mined. My father never wanted mining, he was worried about what would happen and so much of what he predicted has come true. All of us Mirarr are proud that Rio Tinto is honouring its promise at Jabiluka. We're happy hearing that. We have to protect Jabiluka," Ms Margarula said.

Ms Margarula, 64, was joined by her 21-year-old nephew, Mirarr traditional owner Corben Mudjandi, who confirmed the intergenerational opposition to mining on Mirarr country.

"Ranger has shown us the danger and huge problems with uranium mining. The idea that you can fix Ranger's problems with more mining at Jabiluka is absurd," Mr Mudjandi said.

The Jabiluka mining lease is due to expire on 1 July 2024. Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) last week welcomed commitments from Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek, in her address on the State of the Environment Report, to working with Indigenous people to protect cultural heritage.

The CEO of GAC, Justin O'Brien, said the Mirarr traditional owners hope to partner with the Albanese government and Minister Plibersek to ensure the permanent protection of Jabiluka, which is surrounded by World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park.

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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
 - The current authority for the completion of rehabilitation at Ranger urgently needs to be extended, remaining rehabilitation will fall back onto the Commonwealth
 - 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
 - potential for long-term negative impacts from uranium mining and processing 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 and other Aboriginal people in the region
 - Mirarr led a successful international "Stop Jabiluka Mine" campaign to protect their country from mining during the 1990s-2000s. This culminated in:
 - an immediate halt to mine construction
 - no uranium being exported from Jabiluka
 - mining works being reversed, with mineralised ore returned underground
 - rehabilitation works at the site
 - a Long Term Care and Maintenance Agreement committing the mining company to honour the wishes of the Mirarr
 - Rio Tinto has repeatedly publicly stated its commitment to the Long Term Care and Maintenance Agreement for Jabiluka, most recently at the company's AGM this year when outgoing chair Simon Thompson reiterated Rio Tinto's, "commitment that we will not develop Jabiluka without the agreement of the Mirarr people"
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