

Australia Retreats in the face of UN Criticism

7 July 1999

The Australian government today announced to the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee that development of the Jabiluka uranium mine will be suspended until the cessation of mining at Ranger and as late as the year 2009.

The announcement came after Australia was strongly criticised by the World Heritage Committee's expert Advisory Bodies over the impact of Jabiluka on the cultural and natural values of Kakadu National Park.

The Bureau of the World Heritage Committee decided to form a Working Party to provide recommendations to the special Kakadu Committee Meeting on Monday 12 July.

The Extraordinary Meeting (only the third Extraordinary Committee Meeting in the history of the World Heritage Convention) will decide whether the extensive array of supposed corrective measures should be accompanied by the inclusion of Kakadu on the list of World Heritage in Danger.

Executive Officer of Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation, Jacqui Katona, said today, "We welcome the serious concerns expressed by members of the Bureau with regard to cultural values."

"These concerns are matched by the Bureau's explicit requirement to avoid cosmetic outcomes and uphold the World Heritage Convention."

"The Australian government is yet to provide details on the proposed 10-year delay and we remain concerned that there has yet to be any attempt to discuss the issue with the Mirrar."

"This issue has not been lost on the Bureau, who repeatedly called on Australia to develop a relationship of trust with Traditional Owners," Ms Katona said.

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