

Mirarr welcome Senate report, call for discussion of recommendations

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The Traditional Owners of the Jabiluka and Ranger uranium mine areas in Kakadu National Park, the Mirarr People, today welcomed the Senate inquiry report into the environmental regulation of uranium mining, claiming it vindicates long-held concerns. The report was tabled in the Senate last night.

Mirarr spokesperson Andy Ralph said the report is testimony to the Mirarr's worries. Media Releases over the inadequacy of the Commonwealth and Northern Territory regulation of the uranium projects at Kakadu.

"The report acknowledges the Mirarr concerns regarding protecting the environment and that the Commonwealth and Territory regulators must lift their game. It raises the bar on environmental protection."

"While we applaud the good work the mining company has done at both Ranger and Jabiluka over the past 18 months, the Traditional Owners of this country will always seek to guarantee the best environmental protection possible. It's somewhat ironic that the mining company itself has lifted its game and that the Commonwealth and Territory regulators are lagging behind." Mr Ralph said.

Importantly, the Senate has also acknowledged that Mirarr should have a greater involvement in the protection and management of their country - by assuming positions on key forums such as the so-called Minesite Technical Committees.

The report also acknowledged that the allegations by former Ranger employee Mr Geoffrey Kyle of environmental mismanagement at the mine site (dating back several years) have not been adequately assessed by the Commonwealth and Territory and that the need for a truly independent assessment of the allegations remains.

"The allegations by Mr Kyle prompted the Senate inquiry in the first place, so it's heartening to see that his comments and concerns have not fallen on deaf ears," Mr Ralph said.

The Senate Committee has agreed with Mirarr that the environmental monitoring systems at Ranger and Jabiluka need to be broadened, by increasing the number of monitoring points, adopting event-based monitoring and reviewing the limits set for contaminants. Many other recommendations reflect the arguments of the Traditional Owners and their representatives. Mr Ralph said it is now timely to consider what aspects of the report may be implemented in the short-term.

"We're calling for the mining company, the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments to sit down with the Traditional Owners and the Northern Land

Council to discuss the implementation of the recommendations of the report. This should happen as a matter of priority," Mr Ralph concluded.