

Senate must act on claims of Kakadu uranium cover-up

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Fresh allegations of inadequate environmental management at Rio Tinto's Ranger uranium mine highlight the need for a full and independent Senate Inquiry into environmental monitoring and reporting at both Jabiluka and Ranger, according to the Traditional Owners, the Mirarr People.

Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation Executive Officer, Andy Ralph, said the reports of new allegations of environmental mismanagement at Ranger are of great concern to the Mirarr.

"These reports only add to long-held suspicions of a culture of secrecy and cover-ups at Ranger," Mr Ralph said.

"The system of self-monitoring and reporting in place at Ranger is patently inadequate. At present, the regulatory authorities rely entirely on the mining company for mine site monitoring and for relaying on what information it deems fit to the government," he said.

"While the substance of the allegations remains unclear, it appears the regulatory authorities have once again been caught with their hands off the wheel."

The fresh allegations follow reports in March that the mining company both neglected to report elevated uranium levels at the Jabiluka mine site and incorrectly placed some 84,500 tonnes (some 1,000 truckloads) of uranium ore at Ranger, leading to the contamination of a creek feeding the Magela Creek, which flows through Aboriginal communities.

The new allegations, reported today by the Office of the Supervising Scientist, relate to poor environmental management practices at Ranger in 1997 and 1998.