

# GUNDJEIHMI

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



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**Media Statement – 7 December 2013**

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## **One million litre nuclear accident in Kakadu**

A tank containing toxic radioactive acid has burst at Rio Tinto's Ranger uranium mine within the bounds Kakadu National Park. Up to one million litres of radioactive acid slurry has escaped the containment area of the holding tanks, and has forced an immediate halt to all processing. It is understood the area will be inoperable for over a month.

The Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation (GAC), which represents the Mirarr Traditional Owners of the area, is calling for a comprehensive audit of the entire Ranger operation including the aging plant facilities. This is a major nuclear accident, and comes within a month of two other high risk operational incidents, leaving the Mirarr Traditional Owners in the region concerned for the safety of the Park and its residents and visitors.

GAC's Chief Executive Officer Justin O'Brien said: "People living just a few kilometres downstream from the mine don't feel safe. How can we trust the assurances of a company which has repeatedly failed to safely manage this highly toxic material? What may happen next?"

The news has placed further strain on the relationship between Rio Tinto and Mirarr Traditional Owners at a time when Rio Tinto is seeking approval for its proposed Ranger 3 Deeps underground uranium mine.

"Litre by litre, incident by incident, Rio Tinto's assurances are proving less and less reliable and yet the company is still hopeful the Mirarr will trust them to build a new mine on this site.

"This is nothing but a hillbilly operation, run by a hillbilly miner with hillbilly regulators. Based on the woefully inadequate government response to the previous incident, we have no confidence that this will be taken seriously enough.

"This company, and the Australian and Northern Territory governments are clearly out of their depth here and must seek international assistance on the safest way to clean up this mine and protect the people and environment of Kakadu." Mr O'Brien concluded.

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For further information or comment: Justin O'Brien on 08 8979 2200 or 0427 008 765