

## **Mirarr call for agreement on Jabiluka**

5 DECEMBER 2002

### **No development without Aboriginal consent must be in writing**

The Traditional Owners of the site of the proposed Jabiluka uranium mine in Kakadu, the Mirarr People, have called on mining company Energy Resources of Australia (ERA) to enter into an agreement with the Northern Land Council to give legal effect to the company's commitment to not develop the Jabiluka project without the full consent of Traditional Owners.

The call comes after yesterday's announcement that mining giant Rio Tinto, which owns 68% of ERA, has received 'brownie points' from fund manager Sustainable Asset Management for 'curtailing development of its Jabiluka uranium mine in the Northern Territory because of concerns of the local Indigenous people'.

The Mirarr are vehemently opposed to the Jabiluka project and have led a major domestic and international campaign against the proposed mine, on the grounds it would destroy Mirarr country and culture. Executive officer of Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation, Andy Ralph said it was wrong to assume that the company has met the clear Aboriginal aspiration that the project never be developed and has called on ERA to put its promises into effect.

"Sir Robert Wilson of Rio Tinto has repeatedly stated at AGMs and in the media that Jabiluka would not be developed without Mirarr consent and from Rio's evidence to the current Senate Inquiry into uranium mining we now know that he has stated the position of the ERA Board on this matter. Now is the time for ERA to put this commitment in writing and give it legal effect. Doing this would provide substance to and clarify Rio Tinto's sustainability rhetoric," Mr Ralph said.

"Committing in writing to not developing Jabiluka without Aboriginal consent is a basic threshold issue for Rio Tinto and ERA. Without this commitment they stand in contempt of the ideals of sustainability and community-mindedness they espouse. This is a key test of the company's commitment and credibility."

The report of a Senate Inquiry into the regulation of uranium mining in Australia, including Rio Tinto's Kakadu uranium operations, is expected in the new year.