

Mirarr vow to end Jabiluka despite Howard's return

17 NOVEMBER 2001

The Traditional Owners of the Jabiluka uranium mine area, the Mirarr People, today reaffirmed their opposition to the controversial mine despite the re-election of the pro-uranium Howard Government. The call came following an inspection of Jabiluka by representatives of the Mirarr and the environment movement to examine a controversial new water management system.

"The Mirarr remain vehemently opposed to Jabiluka, their resolve is steadfast. While naturally disappointed at the return of a pro-Jabiluka Commonwealth government, the traditional owners stand united against the destruction of their country, culture and sacred sites," said Gundjeihmi Executive Officer, Andy Ralph.

Mr Ralph said the visitors examined the new water management system, in which both treated and untreated contaminated water is irrigated over more than 6 hectares of land. "This emergency measure, irrigating almost the entire Jabiluka site, is necessary because of severe water management problems. Despite the rhetoric of the Howard Government, Jabiluka clearly threatens the natural and cultural values of Kakadu."

The site inspection also marks the first anniversary of the Kakadu Charter, signed by Mirarr Senior Traditional Owner Yvonne Margarula and ACF President Peter Garrett on 17 November 2000. The Charter is a formal agreement founded on the understanding that mining poses real threats to Kakadu National Park, that its future must be based on a vibrant Aboriginal economy independent of mining, and that traditional owners maintain a primary role in decision-making for the protection of Kakadu's natural and cultural values.

"The Kakadu Charter sets out a clear set of hopes and aims," Mr Ralph said. "We will continue to work with people in Kakadu, across Australia and around the world in order to protect the country and the culture of the Mirarr people. The Charter is our road map to a future free of mining, in which Aboriginal people are free and able to determine their own destiny.

"Kakadu is one of Australia's best places and uranium mining is one of our worst industries. The Jabiluka project remains stalled due to lack of Mirarr consent, community opposition and record low uranium prices. The majority shareholder Rio Tinto has announced that it does not support the short-term development of the controversial project and it is time that Jabiluka was halted and rehabilitated," Mr Ralph said.