

Hill Must Be Sacked From Kakadu

29 May 1999

The Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Robert Hill, must be removed from all Ministerial decision-making affecting Aboriginal people in the Kakadu region. His decision today to reject an application from the Mirrar under the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act and to allow construction of the Jabiluka uranium mine to desecrate the Boyweg-Almudj Sacred Site Complex is the latest in a long line of anti-Aboriginal decisions made by the Minister.

The Minister made his decision in the absence of any project-specific cultural assessment of ERA's Jabiluka mine.

Executive Officer of the Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation, Jacqui Katona, said today:

“Since 1996, Senator Hill has ignored the Traditional Owners, the Site Custodians, the Kakadu Board of Management, the Kakadu/Arnhem Aboriginal community, the Northern Land Council, ATSIC, the International Committee on Monument and Sites, the World Heritage Committee and his own department by allowing construction of Jabiluka to proceed in the absence of adequate cultural assessment.”

“His decision today therefore comes as no surprise.”

“Senator Hill has no regard for the indisputable negative impact on Aboriginal people of mining within Kakadu. He has systematically avoided the cultural destruction already occurring from mine construction in his political obsession for Jabiluka to proceed. This is the reason his decisions on Jabiluka have not received support from a single indigenous organisation.”

“Both the Government and the mining company have been aware of potential impacts in the Boyweg-Almudj Sacred Site since well before construction began. Yet Senator Hill has stood by and watched ERA build a mine tunnel with no cultural heritage management plan and no viable milling option. It is a case of wanton cultural vandalism which is viewed in horror by the Australian public and the international community.”

“Today the Australian Government has completed yet another page in the history of Aboriginal cultural eradication.”