

Mirarr Consent to Jabiluka Not Forthcoming

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The Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation issues the following written statement regarding media reports on the proposed Jabiluka uranium mine.

The Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, on behalf of the Mirarr Traditional Owners, is disappointed at the public speculation by Rio Tinto regarding the prospective development of the proposed Jabiluka mine by Energy Resources of Australia (ERA). The community is extremely distressed at the interpretation Rio has placed on the relationship between the Mirarr community and ERA. Such comments are injurious to that relationship and immediately throw the prospect of future engagement into jeopardy.

The developing engagement with ERA had seen collaborative participation by Mirarr traditional owners in cross cultural awareness training programs, cultural heritage survey work and environmental management activities on the Ranger Project Area (RPA). This occurred in the spirit of redressing deficiencies in ERA's practices that previously ignored the interests and depth of cultural connection held by Traditional Owners to their lands affected by an imposed mining development.

Acceptance by Mirarr to be involved in these activities had been a leap of faith, Mirarr hoping to ensure that closure of the RPA would be conducted in accord with world's best practice, with their input and to their absolute satisfaction. The ultimate goal is for their traditional lands to be finally returned to them for inclusion into the neighbouring Kakadu National Park, a World Heritage Area.

It was made clear to ERA, in brokering the involvement of Mirarr in these activities, that at no time should participation be construed as being evidence of any forthcoming traditional owners' support for the development of Jabiluka.

The future of the Jabiluka mine is governed by the Jabiluka Long-Term Care and Maintenance Agreement between the Mirarr, ERA and the Northern Land Council (NLC) which was realised by the parties after the Mirarr led a concerted international campaign of opposition to earlier attempts to develop the site.

ERA is legally and morally bound to adhere to its obligations under that agreement, which include that there will be no development at Jabiluka without the written consent of the Mirarr Traditional Owners and the Northern Land Council. To date the Mirarr concerns and opposition to that development remain completely unchanged.

In a period of time when the Uranium industry seeks to gain the confidence of Indigenous land owners, these reported comments made by Rio significantly

reaffirm a traditional lack of trust held by Mirarr for the terms of any collaborative partnerships to be respected.

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