

## **JABILUKA, Australia's Bad Faith Exposed**

**14 April 1999**

Tomorrow morning in Sydney the Australian Government will release a report to UNESCO's expert environmental and cultural advisors designed to keep Kakadu of the World Heritage Convention's "In Danger" List despite the continuing construction of the Jabiluka uranium mine.

The Australian Government's process in developing the report has been condemned by the area's Traditional Owners as "an exercise in bad faith of the highest order".

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

"The Australian Government received a seven month reprieve on "In Danger" listing from UNESCO's World Heritage Committee on the basis that it would co-operatively address the imminent threats posed by the Jabiluka project to Mirrar cultural values. Instead the Government has pursued a Machiavellian strategy of attacking the integrity and sincerity of the cultural values under threat."

"For example, the Government has prevented the Traditional Owners and Custodians participating in a Cultural Heritage Management Plan by insisting that blasting and drilling at the construction site continues during any process of cultural assessment. Yet the Commonwealth insists that Traditional Owners and Custodians are to blame for the Government's failure to collect cultural baseline data."

"Worse still, requests from Traditional Owners and Custodians to prevent impending desecration of sites of significance have been rejected because the Government claims there is insufficient data to support their concerns!"

"The Government appointed Bob Collins as their agent to improve service delivery to Aboriginal people in the Kakadu region despite his public attacks on the World Heritage Committee's decisions on Jabiluka and his ludicrous claims that Yvonne Margarula lobbied him for Jabiluka to proceed. Yet when the Traditional Owners raised their concerns about working with Mr Collins they were condemned for "playing politics" and informed that Mr Collins would proceed with projects on Mirrar land without Mirrar involvement."

"It appears obvious that the Commonwealth has no intention of addressing Traditional Owner concerns in good faith. I expect that their submission to UNESCO will aim to discredit and isolate Traditional Owner concerns."

“The Traditional Owners and Custodians for the Jabiluka land will proceed in good faith with UNESCO and duly respond to the Government’s submission. We feel absolutely confident that UNESCO will not be fooled by the Australian Government’s campaign of misinformation and political manipulation,” Ms Katona concluded.