

# GUNDJEIHMI

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



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## Media Statement – 2 February 2022

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The GAC, on behalf of the Mirarr Traditional Owners, welcomes today's announcement by Energy Resources of Australia (ERA) regarding the cost and scheduling of the mine's rehabilitation. The announcement flags the preliminary findings of a necessary reforecast and reveals the scale of the work ahead for the single largest rehabilitation exercise in the history of Australian mining.

As long expected, both the cost and the schedule appear to have been seriously underestimated by ERA, which is majority-owned by Rio Tinto. Cost has now doubled from previous forecasts to a new range from \$1.6 billion to \$2.2 billion.

Mirarr senior traditional owner Yvonne Margarula welcomed greater certainty of the true cost of Ranger's clean-up and reiterated the need for both industry and the Australian Government to remain true to their commitments at Kakadu.

"Ranger has operated on our country for over forty years. I have been waiting for this nearly all my life. ERA and Rio Tinto promise me that everything will be cleaned up properly, but I am worried that the government has forgotten that it put this mine here in the first place. This is going to cost someone a lot more money now and we need to know the government has not forgotten its promises to Aboriginal people," Ms Margarula said.

CEO of GAC, Justin O'Brien, said the Corporation has been working closely with ERA on alternative rehabilitation options and that aside from the costing there were not too many surprises.

"We welcome the announcement. While the news is not good, this is much more transparent for both the market and to the broader national and international community," Mr O'Brien said.

Mr O'Brien said the announcement is a realistic acknowledgement that the era of uranium mining at Kakadu National Park is at an end. "With all mining ceased at Kakadu forever, the world is now watching Australia to see if rehabilitation can be successfully secured. Many people are rightly concerned about the potential environmental impact that this rehabilitation project is having on the World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park," he said.

Mr O'Brien added that the Australian Government must now expedite passage of legislative amendments to provide ERA with continued access to the Ranger site beyond January 2026. It is understood that draft legislation is set to be introduced to the Parliament.

"Not enough has been done to fix the unrealistic schedule set by federal legislation for rehabilitation. We refused to support Ministerial approval of the 2020 version Ranger Mine Closure Plan for this reason. In 2021, ERA failed to meet its first deadline in Jabiru, causing an avoidable housing shortage with which the local community continues to struggle. We cannot have a repeat of that with Ranger."

The Ranger and Jabiluka uranium mine sites are of enormous cultural heritage significance to the Mirarr. The two sites are completely within World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park.

"This is now a critical point for both the environment and for Indigenous land and cultural rights. As ERA completes the reforecast, we look forward to more certainty about the true scale of the task ahead," Mr O'Brien concluded.

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