

Transcript

Station: **ABC 666 CANBERRA** Date: **08/04/2011**
 Program: **AM** Time: **08:17 AM**
 Compere: **TONY EASTLEY** Summary ID: **W00043246948**

Item: **ENERGY RESOURCES OF AUSTRALIA IS UNDER PRESSURE FROM TRADITIONAL LANDOWNERS TO CLOSE THE RANGER URANIUM MINE IN THE KAKADU NATIONAL PARK.**

INTERVIEWEES: GEOFF KYLE, INDUSTRIAL CHEMIST; YVONNE MARGARULA, MIRRAR ELDER; ROB ATKINSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ENERGY RESOURCES OF AUSTRALIA

Audience:	Male 16+	Female 16+	All people
	9600	8800	20300

TONY EASTLEY: The Australian company that produces 10 per cent of the world's uranium is under increasing pressure by Aboriginal traditional owners to shut up shop. The Mirrar people own the section of the World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park that includes the Ranger uranium mine operated by Energy Resources of Australia.

Just days before ERA's annual general meeting, a scientist who used to work for the company says the threat of contaminated water leaking from Ranger into nearby waterways could keep the mine closed for the rest of the year.

Michael Coggan reports.

REPORTER: The Ranger Uranium Mine has operated on a lease inside the heritage-listed Kakadu National Park for 30 years. The mine owner, Energy Resources of Australia, suspended operations at Ranger in



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January because a big wet season has swollen the mine's tailings dam to near capacity.

At a public forum in Darwin last night, the senior traditional owner of the mine site, Mirrar woman Yvonne Margarula, expressed her concerns about poor water management and potential downstream environmental damage if ERA continues mining at Ranger.

YVONNE MARGARULA: Ranger uranium mine - we don't like the more mining, and we still say no. No more mining.

[Applause]

REPORTER: Geoff Kyle is an industrial chemist who worked for ERA before being employed by the Mirrar people. He told the forum organised by the Northern Territory Environment Centre there's no way the company will be able to safely treat the contaminated water stored at Ranger by the time the mining lease expires in 10 years.

GEOFF KYLE: They have facilities to remediate water through chemical water processing. It ends up with microfiltration and osmosis, and it's top shelf stuff but it can only do a couple of megalitres a day, and they've got 10 gigalitres. We're terrified that this is going to ruin our country.



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REPORTER: The company is due to make an announcement next week about whether the mining suspension will continue.

Geoff Kyle believes the mine will remain closed well beyond three months.

GEOFF KYLE: The facts are that the pit's already got a big mob of water in it, and I can't see Ranger getting started again this year.

REPORTER: The traditional owners are repeating calls for Ranger to be shut down permanently in the lead up to ERA's annual general meeting next week. They also oppose the company's plan to use an acid leaching process to increase production and the construction of a new exploratory mine shaft.

The company's Chief Executive, Rob Atkinson, wasn't available for comment about the latest pressure or Yvonne Margarula's declaration that she wants the nearby Jabiluka uranium lease incorporated into Kakadu National Park. But, in an interview earlier this week, he emphasised moves to improve the management of contaminated water at Ranger.

ROB ATKINSON: When you go through a wet season like we have done, it does cause you to think, to assess, to work out how you can do things better, safer.



TONY EASTLEY: ERA Chief Executive, Rob Atkinson, ending that report from Michael Coggan.

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ABs = Managers, administrators, professions. GBs = Grocery buyers.
