



Outrage as leaking uranium mine bids to expand

ENVIRONMENTALISTS say they are "aghast" a uranium mine in Kakadu has applied to build a controversial facility only three days after it emerged it has been leaking into the national park.

The Ranger mine, owned by Energy Resources Australia, on Monday lodged separate applications with the federal and Northern Territory governments.

It is seeking to build a heap leach facility to treat 10 million tonnes of low-grade material each year, producing between 15,000 and 20,000 tonnes of uranium oxide.

Australian Conservation Foundation campaigner Dave Sweeney said yesterday the method relied on sulphuric acid to extract the ore.

"ERA's plan involves increased contamination pathways and more complexity with chemicals, waste rock, tailings, water and the ultimate re-

habilitation of the Ranger site," he said.

"It would be a very significant increase in chemicals with very significant implications."

He is urging governments to reject the application, and another to expand the mine.

The Ranger mine was reportedly leaking 100,000 litres of contaminant into the world heritage-listed national park daily.

ERA denied the allegations and said it was only saline solutions pooling under the operation.

"We are aghast and we can't believe the audacity of this mob ... Instead of trying to fix this serious problem ... ERA seems hellbent on worsening it," Mr Sweeney said.

ERA general manager of business development David Patterson said the mine had no impact on Kakadu.

"ERA has no impact on the surrounding environment," he said.