



# European MPs told of mine fears



KAKADU traditional owners have met with members of the European Parliament to highlight their concerns about the Ranger uranium mine.

Members of the Mirarr clan travelled to Brisbane to voice their worries about the mine's history of leaks, spills and regulatory breaches.

The mine, run by Rio Tinto's uranium operator Energy Resources of Australia (ERA), is located on Mirarr land in the boundaries of the world heritage listed Kakadu National Park.

Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation executive officer Justin O'Brien said the presentation came against a backdrop of suspended production at Ranger due to concerns over heavy rains and flooding.

ERA had new plans to expand the mine using controversial acid heap leach technology, Mr O'Brien said.

"International scrutiny comes

at a critical time for the Mirarr people and is very welcome," he said.

"The ongoing operations at Ranger, combined with renewed pressure for expansion, threaten the natural and cultural values for which Kakadu is listed as world heritage.

"ERA's current difficulties highlight the company's inability to safely manage its existing operations and cast serious doubts over its capacity to manage any expansion."

## Understand

Mr O'Brien said European nations using nuclear-generated electricity needed to understand there was a social and environmental cost at the start of the nuclear fuel cycle.

"I think it's well understood in Europe there are problems with the processing middle points of the cycle and of course the handling of the waste, but it's little understood that there is a great social upheaval at the front end of that cycle," he said.

The briefing followed a series

of meetings in Brussels in 2010 between Mirarr representatives and members of the European Parliament.

Speaking through an interpreter, Mirarr Elder Annie Ngalmirama said the people's key concerns included mine waste and water management, contamination threats and the long-term social and cultural impacts of mining.

"We want them to understand what is involved in mining uranium on our land and the effects it has on Aboriginal people," she said.

"Because of our beliefs about the spiritual element of the land, damage to the land affects our lives in a spiritual sense.

"We have many worries and fears about our land and what's happening to it, and we tried to convey those concerns to the European delegation, but we don't know what they made of all of this.

"We can't know what they think. but we did our best."