



Mine tailings dam nears capacity

By CONOR BYRNE

THE tailings dam at Ranger uranium mine is almost full after this wet season's very heavy rainfall.

The dam level is at 52.16m and the wet season target level is 52.5m, says the Federal Environment Department supervising scientist Alan Hughes.

Ranger uranium mine, beside Kakadu National Park, temporarily has ceased operations because of recent

heavy rainfall and for maintenance. It is expected to start operating again in April or May.

Mr Hughes said the water level is close to maximum, but it can go to the dry season target of 53m without worry. He expects up to 500mm of rain for the rest of the Wet. "It does not pose any hazards to go beyond that to the maximum operating level for the dry season of 53m," Mr Hughes said at Senate estimates.

The Top End is expected to breach its wet season rainfall record this week.

Mr Hughes said there were no tributaries into the dam, and if it does reach the limit, water will be transferred to the operating pit.

He also said it probably will be several years before there will be a public real-time monitoring system of water quality in the creeks around the mine.

At the moment, the water quality data is given to mine

technical staff and traditional owners Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, and is published on the *Supervising Scientist* website several weeks later.

Ranger managing director Rob Atkinson has said safeguards made it impossible for the dam to overflow into Kakadu National Park.

Ranger had an estimated \$240 million wiped off its share value after announcing the temporary shutdown last month.



Heavy rainfall this wet season has seen the tailings dam at Ranger uranium mine almost reach capacity



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 **HE SAID IT**



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It does not pose any hazards to go beyond (52.5m) to the maximum operating level for the dry season