

# GUNDJEIHMI

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



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Media Statement – 4 August 2011

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## Mirarr welcome abandonment of Kakadu uranium leach proposal

Today's announcement by Kakadu uranium miner and Rio Tinto subsidiary Energy Resources of Australia (ERA) that it will scrap its proposed acid heap leaching plant has been welcomed by Mirarr traditional Aboriginal owners. The Mirarr people, represented by the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, have congratulated ERA, which operates the Ranger Uranium Mine, for heeding widespread stakeholder opposition to the controversial proposal and has called for a redoubling of effort to conclude the renegotiation of the Ranger mine agreement.

"The company has listened to stakeholders and opted against the dangerous and untested use of acid leaching of uranium in a sensitive tropical environment. It is a rational decision that we welcome," said the executive officer of the Gundjeihmi Corporation, Justin O'Brien.

"We also welcome ERA's commitment to increase the rehabilitation provision in its financial statements from \$314M to \$550M. This, too, is a welcome sign that the company has heeded our long-standing concern at the lack of active focus on rehabilitation," he added.

Mr O'Brien stressed that Rio Tinto and ERA must now address the historical inequities that underpin the Ranger operation by concluding the now 13-year renegotiation of the Ranger mine agreement.

"Thirty-three years ago the Australian Government imposed an agreement on the Mirarr traditional owners for a mining operation that they outright opposed. To get around Mirarr opposition the government, which then owned 50% of the Ranger mine, singled out the Mirarr People by legislating away their veto rights at Ranger and forcing upon them an unpopular and patently insufficient mining agreement.

"For the Ranger operation to have any legitimacy, for ERA and Rio Tinto to act in a manner consistent with their internationally stated goals of sustainability and community relations, the Ranger agreement must now be speedily completed," Mr O'Brien said.

The authority to operate the Ranger mine, granted under the Commonwealth's defence powers under the *Atomic Energy Act*, expires in 2026. Mining and milling must cease by January 2021 and rehabilitation by January 2026.

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