

GUNDJEIHMI

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Media Statement

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Held To Ransom: Rio Tinto's radioactive legacy at Kakadu

The Mirarr Traditional Owners of Kakadu National Park have accused mining giant Rio Tinto of holding the World Heritage area to ransom by revealing it will not guarantee the rehabilitation of the controversial Ranger uranium mine unless the company's plans to expand operations at the site are approved.

ERA, 68% majority owned by Rio, has revealed in its annual report that funding for rehabilitation, despite being legally required, is now likely contingent on securing approval for the proposed 'Ranger 3 Deeps' underground expansion of the mine.

...if the Ranger 3 Deeps mine is not developed, in the absence of any other successful development, ERA may require an additional source of funding to fully fund the rehabilitation of the Ranger Project Area. (ERA Annual Report p.17)

At its London AGM this week Rio Tinto boss Sam Walsh attempted to distance the parent company from Ranger's rehabilitation, saying it was an issue for ERA. However, Mirarr Traditional Owners said the company has failed in its obligations despite profiting massively from mining the area for the past 30 years.

"The attitude of Rio and ERA demonstrates little has changed in the more than three decades since Galarrwuy Yunupingu described talks over the Ranger mine as 'like negotiating with a gun to my head'," CEO of Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation Justin O'Brien said.

"The mining giants have made enormous profits at the expense of Mirarr traditional lands and are now holding the World Heritage listed area to ransom."

This comes just months after the spill of 1.4 million litres of toxic slurry, while the mine is shut down and under investigation and while ERA develops its proposal for further mining at Ranger.

"Rio Tinto is a tenant on Mirarr land. They come and they go. If a tenant told you they weren't prepared to fix the damage they caused to your house unless you agreed to give them a longer term lease, you'd laugh them out of the building – what does this type of announcement say about these tenants?" asked Mr O'Brien.

"It is inconceivably thoughtless and arrogant of any mining company to manage its corporate social responsibilities in this way and regrettably brings to mind the comment made by Mirarr Senior Traditional Owner Yvonne Margarula in 2003: *'The promises never last, but the problems always do'*".

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