

AUSTRALIA'S DAY OF SHAME

February 17, 1999

The Australian Government's strategy to prevent inscription of Kakadu National Park on the List of World Heritage in Danger, leaked yesterday by Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Laurie Brereton, has provoked outrage from the Traditional Owners of the Jabiluka Mineral Lease area.

Executive Officer of the Mirrar people's organisation, the Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation, said today:

"It has now been confirmed that this Government would rather lie and cheat than address the survival of Aboriginal people in the Kakadu region. Instead of addressing the compelling evidence that the Jabiluka uranium mine will result in cultural devastation for the Mirrar people, the Government is seeking to conduct a shameful dirty tricks campaign to avoid international embarrassment."

"While this may be some sort of diplomatic game for Ministers Hill and Downer, the Mirrar see this issue affecting their very survival. Just last week Senior Traditional Owner Yvonne Margarula explained to Minister Hill how her culture would die as a result of the Jabiluka mine. He dismissed her concerns out of hand despite the forthcoming deliberations of the World Heritage Committee. Now we know why."

"The Government knows that the Jabiluka mine and the survival of Mirrar culture are incompatible. It knows that it cannot honestly counter this fact in international fora. So instead it is seeking to achieve its aims by corrupt and immoral means.

"Minister Hill should resign over his wilful failure to address the cultural devastation about to be wreaked on the Mirrar. He has been condemned by the World Heritage Committee for allowing Jabiluka to proceed without any Cultural Heritage Management Plan and is now seeking to escape liability by buying World Heritage Committee votes. He is an international disgrace.

"With Jabiluka this Government has faced the true test of reconciliation and failed miserably."

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