

**Re. Referral of Ranger contamination incident to Northern Territory
Department of Justice**

19 MAY 2004

The Mirarr Traditional Aboriginal Owners of the Ranger uranium mine welcome the decision by the Northern Territory Minister for Mines and Energy to refer the March 2004 Ranger process water contamination incident to the Department of Justice for likely prosecution. The NT Minister announced his referral of the matter during a media conference in Darwin today.

Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation welcomes this decision by the NT Minister and looks to the Department of Justice to prosecute mine operator Energy Resources of Australia (ERA) for these clear breaches of the company's authorisation.

The Corporation believes ERA has:

- breached the Commonwealth Environmental Requirements by not keeping levels of radiation and chemical pollutants as low as reasonably achievable;
- breached the Commonwealth Environmental Requirements by not totally containing process water in a closed system; and
- breached its Northern Territory authorisation specifically by not keeping levels of radiation and chemical pollutants as low as reasonably achievable and generally by breaching the Commonwealth requirements which underpin the NT authorisation.

The recommendation by the NT Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) that ERA be prosecuted for breaches of law vindicates the long-held concerns of the Mirarr that Ranger is not being operated or regulated in a matter that befits a World Heritage listed National Park.

Mirarr have struggled for many years to have their concerns taken seriously by industry and by government. This decision by the NT Government is testimony to the fact that these concerns were true and that the mining company and government regulators need to lift their game at Ranger.

The Corporation is disappointed, however, that the Minister will not publicly release the DBIRD report. There should be a full and frank public release of this important report as soon as possible.