



# Northern Land Council

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **ERA and Commonwealth must act on U spills**

**7 March 2002**

NLC Chief Executive Norman today said that the NLC will be taking up the issue of spills, leakages and accidents at the Ranger mine with both ERA and the Commonwealth Government.

“There appear to have been a number of operational errors which have led to high levels of contamination in waters adjacent to the site,” said Mr Fry. “I am very disturbed that not only were mistakes made which lead to contamination, but that ERA failed to adequately detect the high levels within an appropriate time frame.”

“The fact that they then did not notify stakeholders, including the traditional owners, until last week just compounded the problems. ERA and the Commonwealth Government must not lose sight of the fact that the traditional owners live in the area affected and rely on it for their physical and cultural sustenance.”

“The Ranger mine is the responsibility of the mining company ERA in the first instance, but the Commonwealth Government also must take its share of the blame. The mine is situated on a Commonwealth lease, and it is time that the Commonwealth Government started to ensure that adequate environmental management is implemented.”

“This is not the first time that such accidents have occurred, and the fact that such fundamental operational errors continue to occur raises serious questions about the efficacy of ERA’s systems.”

“We will now be taking up our concerns with the Commonwealth Minister with whom we are currently engaged in negotiations over the renewal of the lease for the mine.

The recent incidents reinforce the need for the Commonwealth to fulfil its obligations in relation to enforcing environmental standards. Repeated incidents of this nature further undermine the traditional owners’ and the public’s confidence in the Commonwealth and ERA’s capacity to deliver on environmental standards” said Mr Fry.

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