



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

Traditional owners disappointed with McArthur River mine decision

20 February 2009

NLC Chief Executive Kim Hill today said that traditional owners are disappointed with the announcement by the Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett to approve the expansion of the McArthur River mine, near Borroloola.

However, the NLC welcomes new stringent environmental monitoring requirements on McArthur River Mining (MRM), and Minister Garrett's recommendation that MRM pursue 'a more active engagement with local stakeholders, including Traditional Owners.'

"Traditional Owners are deeply disappointed the Federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, is giving the go-ahead for a diversion of the McArthur River in order for Swiss mining company Xstrata to expand its zinc mining operations," Mr Hill said.

"There has never been a negotiated agreement between the mining company and Traditional Owners, and a workable outcome would be the development of an agreement that would provide tangible benefits to local Aboriginal people."

Mr Hill said Traditional Owners would obtain legal advice regarding the decision, and as to possible avenues for compensation.

Traditional Owners have had numerous cultural and environmental concerns about the mine's impact on marine life in the McArthur River and offshore, and important cultural sites, Mr Hill said.

The NLC calls on McArthur River Mining (MRM) to negotiate an agreement with Traditional Owners, and calls on the Northern Territory Government to mandate provisions to ensure all mining companies make public their Mining Management Plan, so that the environmental impact of mining operations is known to the local community.

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