



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

NLC objects to McArthur River Mine approvals

20 August 2019

The Northern Land Council objects to Minister for Primary Industry and Resources Paul Kirby's approval of an amendment to the existing mine management plan (MMP) for the McArthur River Mine.

The NT Environment Protection Authority have clearly warned that there is significant environment risk and uncertainty associated with the project. The report identifies that McArthur River Mining Pty Ltd has not outlined a legitimate plan to ameliorate environmental risk.

"Today's decision to approve an amendment to the Mine Management Plan is premature," said NLC CEO Marion Scrymgour.

"Minister Kirby knows that an Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority certificate has not been obtained for the expansion of the Northern Overburden Encapsulation Facility and yet he has approved it anyhow.

"Environment Minister Eva Lawler is yet to decide on the validity of an agreement that MRM say they have reached with traditional custodians in regards to the expansion and whether the agreement satisfies s22(1)(b) of the NT Aboriginal Sacred sites Act."

On environmental issues relating to the mine, Aboriginal people in the region feel that they have been largely ignored, said Ms Scrymgour.

"This is another example in a long history of Traditional Owners being ignored. Aboriginal people in the mine area have consistently been denied involvement in decision making related to the mine, and have not seen the economic benefits that a native title mining agreement would justly bestow."

Aboriginal people in the region harbour mistrust toward the mine and do not have confidence in both governments' willingness and ability to protect their interests, she said.

"The NLC again calls on mine owner Glencore to formally engage with all Traditional Owners affected by the mine and to work together to manage the interests of all parties."

NLC Chairman Samuel Bush-Blanasi said caution should be taken in light of the mine having already caused significant environmental issues, including the improper characterisation of waste rock, lead contamination of fish in Barney Creek, plumes of smoke fumes rich in sulphur dioxide and cattle being contaminated with lead.

The NLC has specific concerns related to the discharge of lead and zinc into the McArthur River.

“The mine’s operating conditions for annual loads of lead and zinc discharged to the McArthur River are far from leading environmental management practice. They do not have a maximum set threshold for the discharge of lead and zinc. This would be of significant concern to Borroloola residents and other downstream Traditional Owners and community members,” said Mr Bush-Blanasi.

ENDS

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