



Submission No 65

**Review of Australia's Relationship with the  
Countries of Africa**

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| Secretary:     |          |

Greetings John,

This is a short note to assist in clarifying any confusion re ACF's claim over tailings management requirements at the Ranger uranium mine in the NT and the applicability of this standard across the range of operations of Australian uranium miners.

Attached for your reference and to make your search for documentation a bit easier is the front page and relevant excerpt of the Ranger mines Environmental Requirements (ER's). I would imagine the Committee could easily access these via the Supervising Scientist unit of the Environment Department.

There is no doubt or question of fact here – Energy Resources of Australia as part of its operating authority at Ranger has “to ensure the tailings are physically isolated from the environment for at least 10,000 years” and that “any contaminants arising from the tailings will not result in any detrimental environmental impacts for at least 10,000 years”.

ACF's contention is simple: this is the law and the standard expected and applied in Australia – given the Australian Uranium Association and the Australia-Africa Mining Industry Group both state that their members are happy to apply Australian standards to their African operations this is the standard that should apply. Paladin Energy's presentation failed to convey this.

I trust that this is of assistance and would welcome you clearing up any misconceptions on the regulatory framework to help inform the Committee's consideration of these issues.

Also I would greatly appreciate a copy of any written or on-notice responses to the issues and recommendations raised in ACF's submission – eg/ I note that Bruce Harvey from Rio Tinto undertook to provide such yesterday.

Thanks and all best wishes for your and the Committee's work,

Dave

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## APPENDIX A

# ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA FOR THE OPERATION OF RANGER URANIUM MINE

## PREAMBLE

The Environmental Requirements for the Ranger uranium mine set out the Commonwealth's environmental protection conditions with which the company must comply. These are conditions of the Authority issued under s41 of the *Atomic Energy Act 1953* and also reflect the Commonwealth's role in the Alligator Rivers Region under the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978*. The operational procedures and practices, and environmental standards, guidelines, codes, regulations or limits relevant to meeting these conditions are set out in Northern Territory legislation and the Ranger General Authorisation established under the *Uranium Mining (Environment Control) Act 1979 (NT)*.

Arrangements for consultation and approval concerning operations at Ranger are set out in the "Working Arrangements" contained in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments, as amended from time to time. These arrangements require the Supervising Authority to consult with and have regard to the views of the Supervising Scientist and the Northern Land Council (NLC) prior to:

- (a) granting an approval or authorisation, or issuing a licence or permit, in connection with environmental aspects of operations; or
- (b) granting approval of environmental management reports; or
- (c) setting standards in connection with any permit, licence, etc relating to environmental aspects of operations; or
- (d) agreeing to the outcome of Best Practicable Technology assessments.

The Supervising Authority will notify the Minister of any action or determination in respect of these Environmental Requirements and act on or implement any subsequent advice from the Minister.

## PRIMARY ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES

### 1. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- 1.1 The company must ensure that operations at Ranger are undertaken in such a way as to be consistent with the following primary environmental objectives:
  - (a) maintain the attributes for which Kakadu National Park was inscribed on the World Heritage list;
  - (b) maintain the ecosystem health of the wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (i.e. the wetlands within Stages I and II of Kakadu National Park);

9.4 Where agreements under subclause 9.2 or 9.3 cannot be reached the Minister will make a determination with the advice of the Supervising Scientist.

## **10. PROTECTION OF SOIL, VEGETATION AND FAUNA**

10.1 All operations should be managed to minimise, to the maximum extent practicable, and to the satisfaction of the Supervising Authority or the Minister with the advice of the Supervising Scientist:

- (a) the disturbance of soil, vegetation and fauna within the Ranger Project Area; and
- (b) the risk to fauna as a result of drinking contaminated water.

10.2 The company must ensure that the operations at Ranger will not result in any adverse impact on Kakadu National Park through the introduction of exotic fauna or flora.

## **11. MANAGEMENT OF TAILINGS**

11.1 During mining operations and prior to final placement, covering and rehabilitation of the tailings, tailings must be securely contained in a manner approved by the Supervising Authority or the Minister with the advice of the Supervising Scientist which prevents detrimental environmental impact.

11.2 By the end of operations all tailings must be placed in the mined out pits.

11.3 Final disposal of tailings must be undertaken, to the satisfaction of the Minister with the advice of the Supervising Scientist on the basis of best available modelling, in such a way as to ensure that:

- i) the tailings are physically isolated from the environment for at least 10,000 years;
- ii) any contaminants arising from the tailings will not result in any detrimental environmental impacts for at least 10,000 years; and
- iii) radiation doses to members of the public will comply with relevant Australian law and be less than limits recommended by the most recently published and relevant Australian standards, codes of practice, and guidelines effective at the time of the final tailings disposal.