

PREFACE

Terms of reference

On 20 June 2002 the Senate asked the Committee to undertake an inquiry with the following terms of reference:

The regulatory, monitoring, and reporting regimes that govern environmental performance at the Ranger and Jabiluka uranium operations in the Northern Territory and the Beverley and Honeymoon *in situ* leach operations in South Australia, with particular reference to:

- (a) the adequacy, effectiveness and performance of existing monitoring and reporting regimes and regulations;
- (b) the adequacy and effectiveness of those Commonwealth agencies responsible for the oversight and implementation of these regimes; and
- (c) a review of Commonwealth responsibilities and mechanisms to realise improved environmental performance and transparency of reporting.

The Senate originally asked the Committee to report on 5 December 2002 but it subsequently agreed to extend the reporting deadline to 14 October 2003 to allow the Committee to give its fullest consideration to the issues.

The inquiry

The Committee invited written submissions from interested individuals and organisations by an advertisement in the national press and in the *NT News* and *Adelaide Advertiser* on 26 June 2002, with an initial request that submissions be lodged by Friday, 9 August 2002. Submissions were received from 87 submitters, with several providing the Committee with additional material and supplementary submissions during the course of the inquiry. Submitter details are shown in Appendix 1.

The Committee undertook a series of six public hearings with some 46 witnesses in Darwin, Jabiru, Adelaide and Canberra in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the issues. Details of these hearings are shown in Appendix 2.

The Committee supplemented the formal discussions of the public hearings with site visits and informal briefings at each of the four uranium mining operations specified in the terms of reference. No details of these are given in this report, given their informal nature.

In the course of the hearings, a large number of documents were tabled for the Committee's information. These are listed in Appendix 3.

Acknowledgements

The Committee wishes to express its appreciation for the cooperation of all witnesses to its inquiry, whether by making submissions, by personal attendance at a hearing or, as in many cases, by giving both written and oral evidence.

The companies operating the four uranium mines visited by the Committee ensured that the inspections were beneficial to its understanding of the issues raised by the terms of reference and the Committee also wishes to extend to them its appreciation for their cooperation.

The Committee also records its appreciation to the officers of the secretariat who assisted with the conduct of the inquiry.