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Review of environmental regulation of Jabiluka and Ranger

An independent technical review into the environmental regulation of Ranger uranium mine and the Jabiluka site will be commissioned by the NT Government, Resource Development Minister Paul Henderson announced today.

Mr Henderson said that recent events had led to concern over operational aspects at both sites, and he wanted an independent assessment of the mechanisms in place to protect the environment and the health of workers and the public.

"Previous reports from the NT and Commonwealth Scientists indicate that there has been no unacceptable environmental impact at Ranger and Jabiluka.

"Nevertheless, as Minister responsible, I want to ensure that the authorisations issued by the Northern Territory Government contain all the right environment and health protection measures."

An independent review is also timely now due to the commencement of the Northern Territory Mining Management Act 2001, which commenced this year. Under the Mining Management Act (which repealed and replaced the Uranium Mining (Environment Control) Act) all mining management plans, including those for Ranger and Jabiluka, are due to be reviewed and finalised by the second half of this year.

"This independent review will look at the authorisations approved under the previous legislation to ensure they continue to meet best practice in environmental protection", Mr Henderson said.

Mr Henderson said that the Terms of Reference for the Review would be:

- The adequacy of the existing authorisations issued by the NT Government to protect the environment and the health of workers and the public;
- The adequacy and timeliness of monitoring and reporting systems including the role of the NT Government in ensuring the company’s compliance with the authorisations; and
- Whether the NT is meeting its obligations to the Commonwealth under an agreement reached in November 2000. This agreement was titled "Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Northern Territory of Australia in relation to principles to be applied in the regulation of uranium mining in the Northern Territory of Australia”.

Mr Henderson said that an independent expert would be appointed as soon as possible to conduct the Review and that he expected to receive the report by the end of September.