

ERA History

The Ranger ore bodies were discovered in 1969 by joint venturers Electrolytic Zinc Company of Australasia Ltd (EZ) and Peko-Wallsend Operations Limited (Peko). The Commonwealth Government took half the ownership of the ore bodies in 1974.

The Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry (Fox Inquiry) was established in 1975 and following presentation of the final report in 1977, which found that uranium mining could proceed, an agreement covering mining was signed with the Northern Land Council, representing the interests of the Aboriginal owners of the area.

Construction at the Ranger site commenced in 1979 and the first drum of uranium oxide was produced on 13 August 1981. Ranger has continuously operated since that time and ERA has grown to be the third largest uranium producer in the world.

Using open cut methods, mining of Ranger Pit #1 orebody commenced in May 1980 and was completed by December 1994. A total of 19.78 million tonnes of ore was mined at an average grade of 0.321%.

Final approval to mine Ranger Pit #3 orebody (located one kilometre north of Ranger Pit #1) was received from the Northern Territory Government in May 1996. Open cut mining of this orebody commenced in July 1997 with mining expected to continue until at least 2009, after which the pit will be used for the storage of tailings and stockpiles will provide feed to the mill.

In 1991 ERA purchased the Jabiluka ore body from Pancontinental Mining for a cost of \$125 million. As part of the ERA purchase of the lease from Pancontinental, the Northern Land Council, on behalf of the Traditional Owners, assigned Aboriginal approvals to ERA.

Jabiluka had previously received environmental approvals from the Commonwealth Government in 1979 and final Aboriginal approvals were received in 1982. The election of the Hawke Labor Government in 1983 led to the implementation of the Labor Party's "Three Mines Policy", effectively halting Jabiluka's development.

ERA undertook a feasibility study on the Jabiluka development in 1993 and significantly changed the design of the project from that of the original Pancontinental plan. When the Coalition Government came to power in 1996 (abandoning Labor's "Three Mines Policy") ERA set to work on producing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) based on guidelines set out by the Government.

In October 1996 a new EIS was submitted for public review which outlined two options: mining and milling uranium ore at Jabiluka (similar in concept to the Aboriginal approved Pancontinental design but now significantly smaller in impact); and trucking Jabiluka ore down to the existing Ranger Mill for processing.

In response to the public review, a supplement to this EIS was submitted in June 1997 which focused on the concept of trucking Jabiluka ore to the Ranger Mill for processing.

In October 1997 the Commonwealth Government announced that the Jabiluka proposal had completed environmental procedures and would be subject to stringent conditions.

In recognition of Aboriginal approvals received in 1982, ERA also put forward the alternative to process the ore at Jabiluka. This Jabiluka Mill Alternative was subject to a Public Environment Report and further public review. Environmental approvals for this alternative were received, subject to strict environmental conditions, in August 1998, provided ERA returns all tailings to the underground mine voids.

In May 1998 ERA began consultations with the Northern Land Council (NLC), who act on behalf of the local Aboriginal people, in relation to the change in design of the Jabiluka proposal.

Final Northern Territory approvals for the development of the mine were received in June 1998.

ERA commenced stage one of development on 15 June 1998. This was completed on 4 July 1999 and includes surface works, a water management pond and the exploratory decline.

Following ERA's completion of stage one development in 1999, the 17-hectare development site (which includes surface works, a water management pond and exploratory decline - all of which are common to both development options) was placed on standby and environmental care and maintenance to facilitate further community discussion on the project.

Since then, ERA has stated that there will be no further development at Jabiluka without the support of the Aboriginal people through their representatives, the NLC.