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## Position Statement

17 December 2020

### **Response to Australian Conservation Foundation Ranger Rehabilitation Report December 2020**

Energy Resources of Australia (ERA) notes recent commentary by the Australian Conservation Foundation, Sydney Environment Institute at the University of Sydney, the Mineral Policy Institute and the Environment Centre NT suggesting the rehabilitation timeframe for the Ranger Project Area is unrealistic and has persistent technical challenges relating to groundwater and tailings management.

The Ranger mine is one of the most highly regulated mines in the world. The mine is governed by both Commonwealth and Northern Territory legislation (see below for further background). Governments, Traditional Owner representatives, independent scientists and the broader community have insight and input to the operation and rehabilitation of the Ranger mine through several standing committees including the Alligator Rivers Regional Technical Committee (ARRTC), the Alligator Rivers Regional Advisory Committee and the Ranger Minesite Technical Committee.

Additionally, the Commonwealth's Supervising Scientist Branch (SSB) has conducted research and provided advice to Governments and key stakeholders for the past forty years including ERA's planning and performance against the Environmental Requirements which define the environmental objectives for Ranger operations and rehabilitation. The SSB has reported no detrimental impacts to the surrounding environment from the Ranger mine.

#### **Ranger Mine Closure Plan**

ERA's strategic priority is the comprehensive rehabilitation of the Ranger Project Area to a standard that meets regulatory requirements and the expectations of the Traditional Landowners. ERA is committed to fulfilling the legislated timeframes and guidelines set out in the Section 41 Authority and to achieving all documented rehabilitation outcomes in its Mine Closure Plan (MCP) by January 2026.

It should be noted that rehabilitation does not commence only at cessation of operations in 2021: in fact rehabilitation has been underway at Ranger for over 25 years. The first open pit has now been fully backfilled and a revegetation program has recently commenced in that area. Since 2012, ERA has spent \$642 million on rehabilitation and water management projects.

The MCP was initially released publicly in 2018 and has been reviewed annually in consultation with all relevant Government, Scientific and Traditional Owner authorities. The MCP has been and is required to be approved by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Resources Ministers on annual basis based on advice from these authorities.

Importantly, ERA is committed to ongoing detailed technical work that informs the annual updates to the MCP. The MCP is an iterative process and as scientific studies, key stakeholder reviews and technical data evolve each year, ERA is committed to incorporating the latest information and project approvals into our ongoing planning.



ERA's understanding of groundwater and our technical groundwater modelling is leading practice and routinely shared and reviewed with the Supervising Scientist Branch and members of the various regulatory committees including the AARTC.

We acknowledge that the addition of further detail on the Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) will clarify our approach in this area: we are committed to incorporating this information directly in our 2021 MCP update for full public disclosure. Decisions reached on the remediation of the TSF, including the clay floor of the TSF, will be made in full collaboration with regulators and key stakeholders and will be in the best interests of protecting the environment.

An updated Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) will be conducted in Q1 2021. This timing reflects when information will be confirmed regarding the future of Jabiru as determined by the proposed new lease arrangements and the vision for the town. This is the most timely opportunity to produce an accurate and useful SEIA. The SEIA will provide input to the 2021 MCP update.

### **Future Land Tenure and Monitoring**

The rehabilitation implications of the potential incorporation of the Ranger Project Area into Kakadu National Park, under UNESCO guidelines, forms part of our ongoing consultation with UNESCO, the SSB and Government authorities.

There are presently no tenure arrangements in place which provide ERA with ongoing access to the Ranger Project Area beyond 8 January 2026. Following expiry of the current Section 41 Authority, ERA will require an extended or new land tenure arrangement to enable access for monitoring and maintenance purposes as well as to complete any rehabilitation activities should these remain outstanding in 2026.

ERA has been liaising with Traditional Owner representatives and the Commonwealth to determine an appropriate mechanism and pathway to facilitate access to the RPA and to preserve the Environmental Requirements beyond 2026. This has included detailed discussions regarding proposed amendments to the Atomic Energy Act 1953 (Cth). Legislative amendment is ultimately a matter for the Commonwealth, however ERA and Traditional Owner representatives are engaged participants in this process.

### **Additional Background**

Closure of the Ranger Mine is governed by both Commonwealth and NT legislation and regulations. The key instrument that governs operations at the Ranger Mine on a day-to-day basis is the authority (the Ranger Authorisation) issued under the NT *Mining Management Act 2018 (Mining Management Act)*. The main Commonwealth authority (the Ranger s41 Authority), issued under section 41 of the *Atomic Energy Act 1953 (Cth) (Atomic Energy Act)*, provides the key tenure and land access approval required for the operations (the section 41 Authority). The Environmental Requirements, which set the objectives for Ranger rehabilitation, are also issued in accordance with the s41 Authority.

END



**ERA**

### **About Energy Resources of Australia Ltd**

Energy Resources of Australia Ltd (ERA) operates the Ranger mine, Australia's longest continually operating uranium mine.

The operations of ERA are located on Aboriginal land and are surrounded by, but separate from, Kakadu National Park. ERA respectfully acknowledges the Mirarr, Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Ranger mine is situated.

Together, ERA provides clean energy to the world and cares for people and country.

ERA has an excellent track record of reliably supplying customers. Uranium has been mined at Ranger for more than 35 years. During that time, Ranger has produced in excess of 130,000 tonnes of uranium oxide.

ERA's Ranger mine is located eight kilometres east of Jabiru and 260 kilometres east of Darwin, in Australia's Northern Territory. ERA is a major employer in the Northern Territory and the Alligator Rivers Region.

Under the current legal framework, ERA is required to cease mining and processing activities in the Ranger Project Area by January 2021, with final rehabilitation to be completed by January 2026.

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