Jabiru Social Impact Assessment report findings
November 2016 – April 2017

From November 2016 to April 2017, Energy Resources Australia (ERA) undertook a Social Impact Assessment for the town of Jabiru.

The existing Jabiru town Head Lease expires in 2021. ERA has a range of rehabilitation obligations for the town which it will need to prepare for ahead of the lease expiring.

The aim of the Social Impact Assessment process was to identify how ERA’s obligations could impact the town, Jabiru and Kakadu National Park residents and visitors and how these impacts could be mitigated. The information gathered during the Social Impact Assessment process will help to develop a plan that supports a smooth transition for Jabiru.

The Social Impact Assessment was not about developing a plan for Jabiru beyond 2021. A separate process involving the Commonwealth Government, Northern Territory Government and Traditional Owner representatives is underway to develop and agree a future plan for Jabiru. Additionally, Government and Traditional Owner representatives are progressing negotiation of a new township lease.

About the Social Impact Assessment process

ERA engaged consulting firm Jacobs to undertake the Social Impact Assessment. The Social Impact Assessment was carried out in three phases:

1. Situational analysis and research to establish the existing socio-economic baseline conditions of Jabiru and to document ERA’s current rehabilitation obligations under the terms of various lease agreements. These current obligations were referred to as the “Base Case” in the Social Impact Assessment process. This Base Case may not represent the final outcome for Jabiru.

During this phase, Social Impact Assessment activities included 38 stakeholder briefing sessions where 295 people attended and were able to hear about ERA’s legal rehabilitation obligations under the town lease, the purpose and methodology for the Social Impact Assessment and opportunities to get involved.

Key topics raised at these sessions included:

- Uncertainty Jabiru residents faced, and continue to face, in relation to the town’s future.
- High level of interest in the work of the Jabiru Stakeholder Planning Group and the timing for decision on the town’s future decision.
- Details and impacts of ERA’s current rehabilitation obligations, with responses varying from concern about the implications through to inability and/or refusal to accept that it is a real option.
- Strong support for a future for the town beyond 2021.
- Many people also asked about the future of operations at Ranger mine, including details of rehabilitation activities.
2. **Consultation with a broad range of stakeholders** to inform them about rehabilitation obligations, potential impacts and implications.

Activities included community and business surveys as well as interviews with 15 key organisations and service providers. Overall, there was a high level of participation in the surveys. Key themes included:

- Stakeholder feedback regarding the impacts and implications of ERA’s current rehabilitation obligations.
- General questions about potential future options and their implications.
- Jabiru residents having nowhere to live and needing to relocate, as well as the loss of (or changes in) employment and loss of infrastructure and services.
- Kakadu National Park residents dealing with a potential loss of infrastructure and services, as well as social dislocation and impacts on cultural life.
- Loss of infrastructure and services to visitors.
- Unsustainable businesses and possible/likely closure, as well as a large reduction in customer base and revenue.
- Planning for service delivery to the remaining population and/or the need to close or relocate.

3. **Assessment to identify potential impacts** and measures to avoid or mitigate socio-economic impacts and identify key considerations for future planning.

**What is the Base Case?**

The ERA Base Case used in the Social Impact Assessment identified ERA’s existing legal obligations to rehabilitate land in Jabiru as outlined in the Head Lease and the Cost Sharing Agreement.

The Base Case took into account:

- Rehabilitation of the town, including infrastructure (water supply, electricity, sewage, storm water and roads), housing and accommodation, retail and commercial premises and social infrastructure.
- Implications of the cessation of Ranger Mine operations. Under the existing legal framework and ERA’s current business plan, Ranger operations will cease no later than 8 January 2021 with mine site rehabilitation fully completed by 8 January 2026. Amongst other impacts, the cessation of Ranger operations will result in:
  - removal of the existing electricity generation capacity which also supplies Jabiru; and
  - removal of the airport. Airport operations would cease by end of 2024 at latest with full rehabilitation of the airport required by 8 January 2026.

The Base Case as outlined in the Social Impact Assessment may not represent the final outcome for Jabiru.

**Potential impacts of the Base Case**

The Social Impact Assessment provides information on potential socio-economic impacts of ERA’s current rehabilitation obligations on Jabiru and Kakadu National Park residents and visitors.
While there is a high level of interest in and support for a future for Jabiru beyond 2021, currently residents and local businesses face uncertainty in the absence of an agreed plan for the future of the town.

The Social Impact Assessment report identified a range of potential socio-economic impacts that could result from the Base Case. These include:

- Displacement of Jabiru residents.
- Impact on employment opportunities and livelihoods including significant decrease in the number of jobs and economy size.
- Loss of Jabiru as a service hub for residents in the region. This includes health, education and retail facilities which may not be as easily accessible in other locations.
- Loss of critical infrastructure including electricity and water supply.
- Closure of Jabiru Airport which would impact tourism, regional charters and other users.

In light of the current uncertainty, several impacts were identified which have the potential to occur regardless of whether the ERA Base Case eventuates with some impacts already occurring. These include anxiety and an inability to plan and make decisions due to the uncertainty about the town’s future.

Measures identified in the Social Impact Assessment that could help to mitigate the impacts include:

- Reaching agreement on a plan for the future of Jabiru.
- Early decision-making to reduce the impacts associated with ongoing uncertainty.
- Regular communication and engagement on progress in future planning and opportunities for the community to be involved in the process.

There was an overwhelming view that Jabiru should have a future beyond 2021. ERA acknowledges that good progress has been made by stakeholders involved in the planning process since the conduct of the Social Impact Assessment.

**About Jabiru**

| Governance | Unique regulatory environment with complex formal governance arrangements.  
Involvement of Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments, the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation and ERA in governance. |
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| Indigenous interests | Jabiru is located on the Aboriginal lands of the Mirarr people.  
Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation represents the Mirarr people and is involved in town governance.  
The Federal Court handed down a decision on 24 August 2016 recognising the Mirarr people as the native title holders for the town of Jabiru.  
In 2013 the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT)* 1976 was amended to provide for Jabiru becoming Aboriginal land subject to a new Township Lease from the Aboriginal Land Trust to a township leasing body. That lease is currently being negotiated with the Northern Land Council. |
### Planning frameworks

- Jabiru is located within Kakadu National Park and is subject to the Kakadu National Park Plan of Management.
- The Jabiru town Head Lease was granted to the Jabiru Town Development Authority by the Director of Parks in 1981 and expires on 30 June 2021. The Cost Sharing Agreement was agreed in 1985 and elaborates on ERA’s obligations with respect to rehabilitation of the town.
- The Jabiru Town Plan 1981 is the specific planning scheme for Jabiru which guides the development of land.

### Land use

- Housing, accommodation, infrastructure and services to support ERA’s residential and Fly In, Fly Out workforce, the tourism industry and Indigenous populations in and surrounding Jabiru.

### Population & demography

- Jabiru population: 1,129 people at the 2011 Census.
- 19 per cent of Jabiru population is Indigenous, low for the region.
- Population of Jabiru can temporarily increase by over 50 per cent due to tourism and visitors engaged in mine work.
- Approximately 314 people live in Kakadu National Park Outstations and Ranger Stations.
- Housing is generally only available to people via local employers or Indigenous organisations.