



Uranium Stakeholder engagement in northern Australia

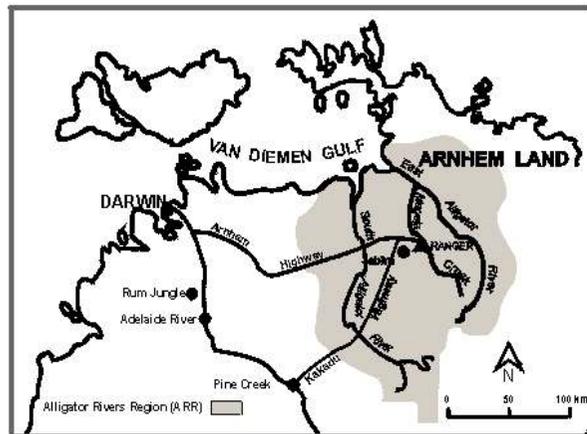
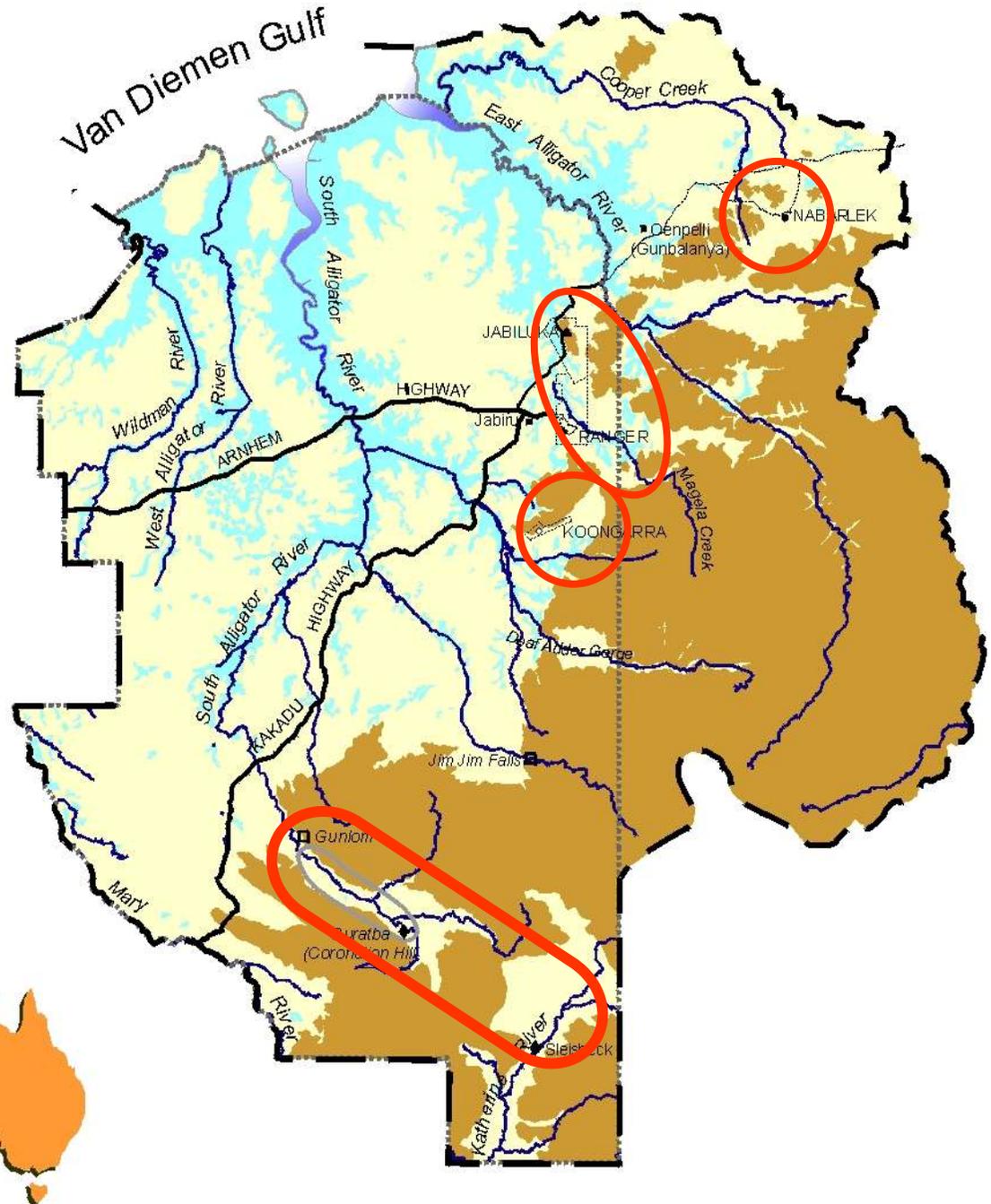
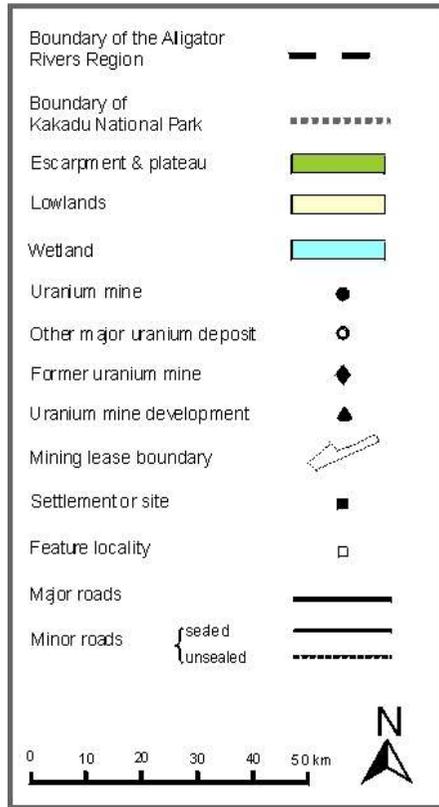
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URAM 2009 – Vienna – June 2009

Alligator Rivers Region



The Situation – then and now

- The Pine Creek Geosyncline
- Active uranium mines
- Abandoned uranium mines
- Regulatory scene -
 - NT Government
 - Commonwealth OSS, DERT, ARPANSA
 - NLC
- Kakadu National Park
- Aboriginal Traditional Owners (ATO) & lands

Modern uranium mining

- SAV mining 1953-1963 approximately
- Mines:
 - Ranger(1980-?) and Nabarlek (1979-88)
 - Koongarra and Jabiluka are mines in waiting
- OSS set up the Coordinating Committee in 1978
 - Wide ranging representation, but with no ATOs
 - 2 meetings per year; very procedural, closed meetings, confidential reports
- Changed in 2001 to become 2 committees
 - Alligator Rivers Region Technical Committee - ARRTC
 - Alligator Rivers Region Advisory - ARRAC
- New committees have more local representation

ARRTC

- ARRTC - to consider and review research programs on the effects of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region
 - Technical specialists from local organisations
 - Some outside experts to assist some member organisations or as leading authorities on issues of concern
 - Sets pattern and programme for research programmes – primarily **eriss** and ERA – and coordinates with others e.g. Parks Australia
 - 2 meetings per year

ARRAC

- ARRAC - as a formal forum for consultation on matters relating to the environmental effects of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region
 - Members from all stakeholders including:
 - ATOs, Federal and State Governments, Local NGOs, Mining and exploration companies working with U in the ARR, mine workers, Jabiru township
 - 2 meetings per year, one always in Jabiru area
 - Meetings tie in with annual audit programmes

Information exchange

- As part of the “updating” from the old Coordinating Committee summary reports of meetings are published on a web site, e.g.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/ssd/communication/committees/arrac/pubs/summary-dec-08.pdf>

Copies of Government departmental reports submitted to ARRAC can be obtained from the Secretariat afterwards

- Also the environmental monitoring data are now available on dedicated a website during times of creek flow
- Annual reports interpreting monitoring data are also published e.g.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/ssd/monitoring/index.html>

Uranium mining activity

- All involved mining companies are invited to ARAAC
 - Ranger is active c.5000 tpa U₃O₈
 - Nabarlek is remediating but also a new exploration site
 - Jabiluka and Koongarra in waiting
 - Exploration under way in the West Arnhem area
- Rum Jungle and Adelaide River U mining areas are outside the ARR but consultation processes there now are generally based on these experiences
- SAV remediation is also discussed at ARRAC

Case Study

South Alligator Valley Remediation

- U mining rush after 1949 > exploration of the 1950s
- In the SAV 50+ anomalies led to 13 mines
- Operation from 1955 to 1964
- Production about 875 t of U_3O_8
- No EIA process and few rules
- No consultation with ATO
- Surrounding land was a cattle station
- Abandonment with no remediation

The Environment



- Wet/dry tropics
- 1200 mm annual rainfall, October - April
- Wet season issues
- Always warm: mean 21°C: range 12-40°C
- Topography
- Vegetation
- Land use

South Alligator Valley: Uranium mining legacies



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Guratba (Coronation Hill)



Background politics

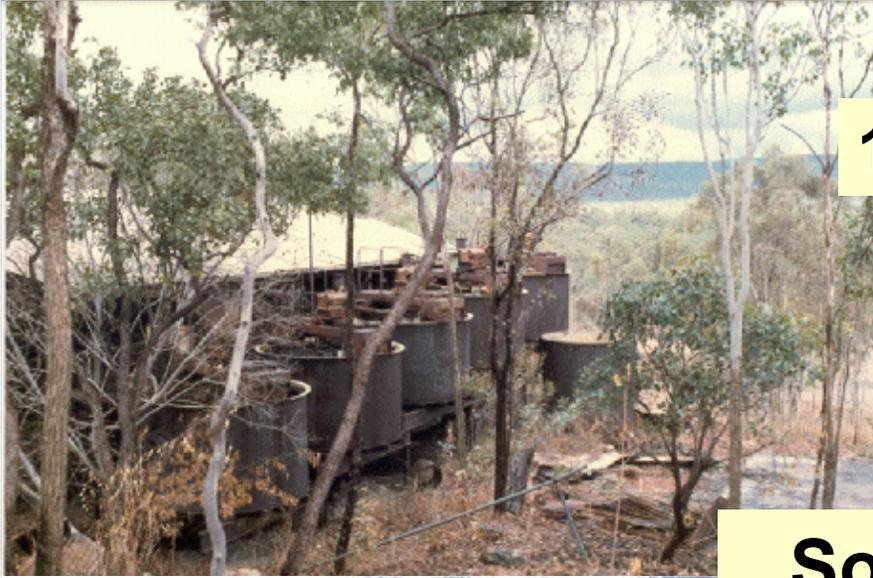
- 1987 - 1991 Conservation Zone activity
 - The Coronation Hill saga
- ATO interests start to be addressed
- OSS become involved
- NLC involvement, land claim process
- 1991 - All work stopped, new mines banned
- 1996 - Land claim granted, lease signed
- 1997 - Rehabilitation planning begins

Remediation History

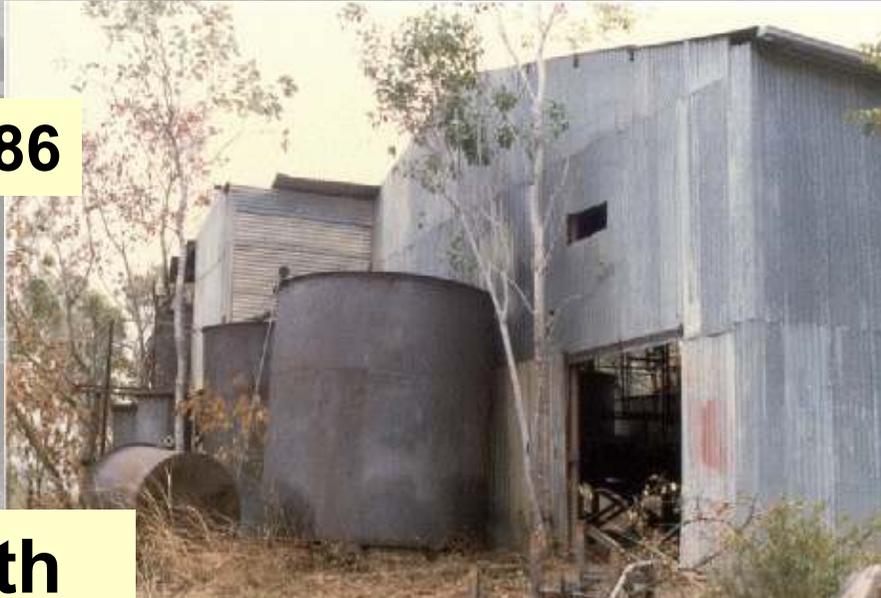
- Rum Jungle remediation in 1984 – 1986
 - Not successful because not sustainable
 - No involvement of Traditional Aboriginal Owners
- 1986 - Initial survey of SAV mining sites
 - SA Mill tailings removed & re-treated for Au
- 1987 - Survey of the mill buildings
- 1988 Further surveys in SAV
- 1990 -92 Hazard reduction works:

Hazard Reduction History

- 2 contracts, mill first, then the rest
- Standards site specific as no others available
- 6 containment sites
- Works supervision by DPIE
- Monitoring program by OSS
- No major consultation with ATO
 - Aboriginal involvement as labourers



1986



South Alligator mill



1986

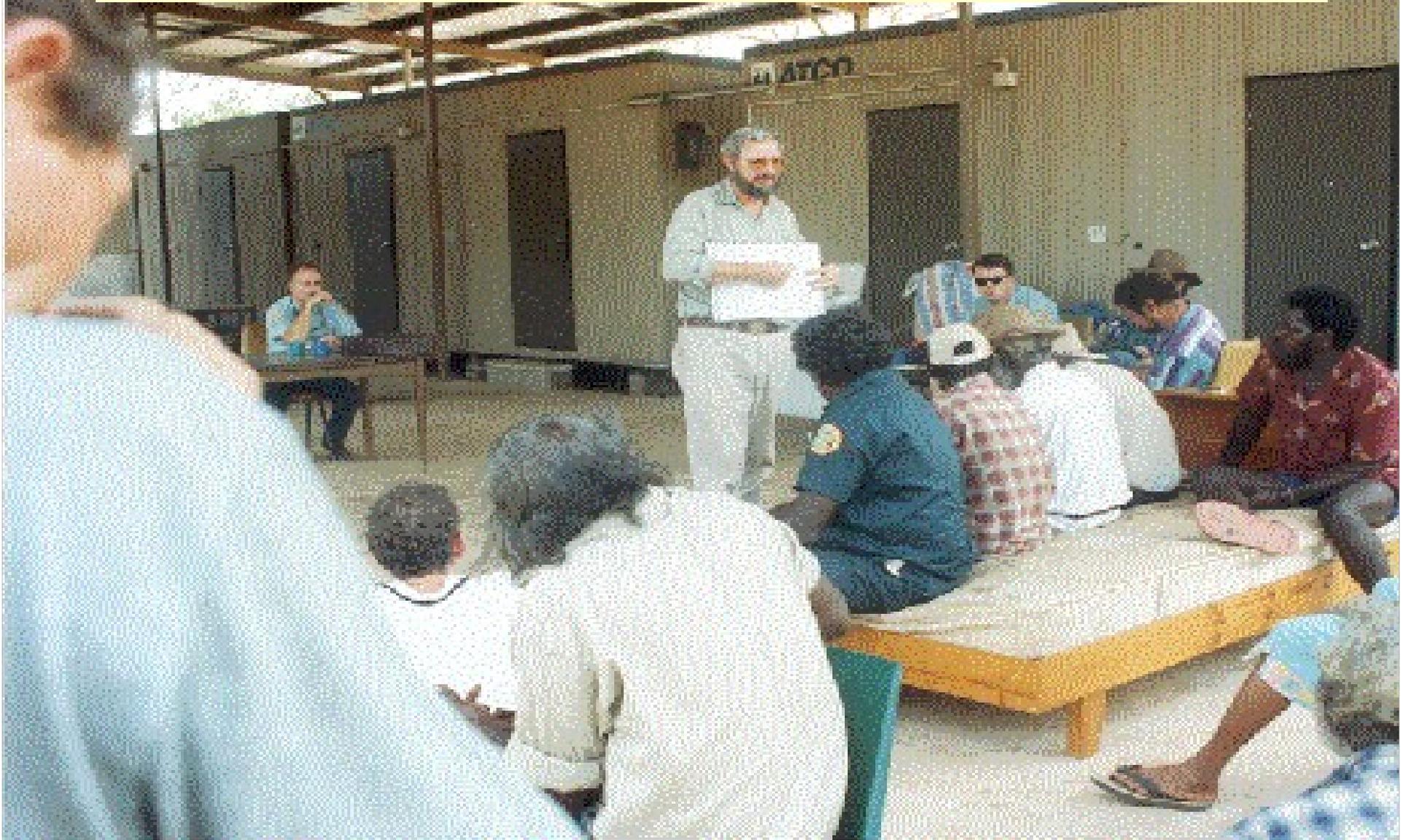


1992

The New Rehabilitation Plan

- 1996 Lease signed
 - Plan complete by 31 December 2000
 - Works complete by 31 December 2015
- 1997 First planning meeting
 - Briefing & site descriptions
 - Consultation on final land use objectives
 - Site visits
- The first “pause”

Initial Consultation in the SA valley, 1997



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The planning process

- 1998-99

- Staffing issues meant no advance since 1997
- Only one meeting
- New staff, new urgency
- New approach
- New consultative committee
 - **Traditional Owners, the majority**
 - **Parks Australia, NLC**
 - **OSS, NTDME**

Consultative Committee

- Frequency of meetings, initially every 6-8 weeks
- Suitable venues and format; also record keeping
- Careful use of a facilitator
- Opening up of discussions
- Cultural issues revealed
 - **machinery sizes**
 - **drilling & blasting**
 - **gender issues**
- Site visits



Site Visits

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Progress at last

- Agreed format for meetings
- Field inspections and camps to discuss issues in “The Dry”
- Minimise need for meetings in “The Wet”
- Use of models, posters, PowerPoint, etc
- Field testing and bush foods issues
- Radiation training course
- Prioritisation of sites by radiation hazard
- Interim works on tailings area, Nov 2000

Typical dry season meeting arrangements



~~SECRET~~

AGENDA

1. DEBRIEF ON RADIATION TRAINING
2. FISH & MUSSEL SURVEYS
3. MINESITES WE HAVE
SOME AGREEMENT ON
4. EWL PRESENTATION ON
ROCKHOLE, SLIESBECK &
GURATBA
5. LUNCH
6. SITE VISITS

AGENDA

**Drawn up by
consensus on
the day**



Use of posters to show water treatment options

June 2009

SESSION ONE

RADIATION TRAINING

- Looked at instruments used to measure
- Radiation is
- ~~It's~~ all around you
 - where it is depends on how it affects you.
 - This area is not as bad as some places.
 - even pilots get radiation
 - Shields to protect
 - Different levels

MINUTES

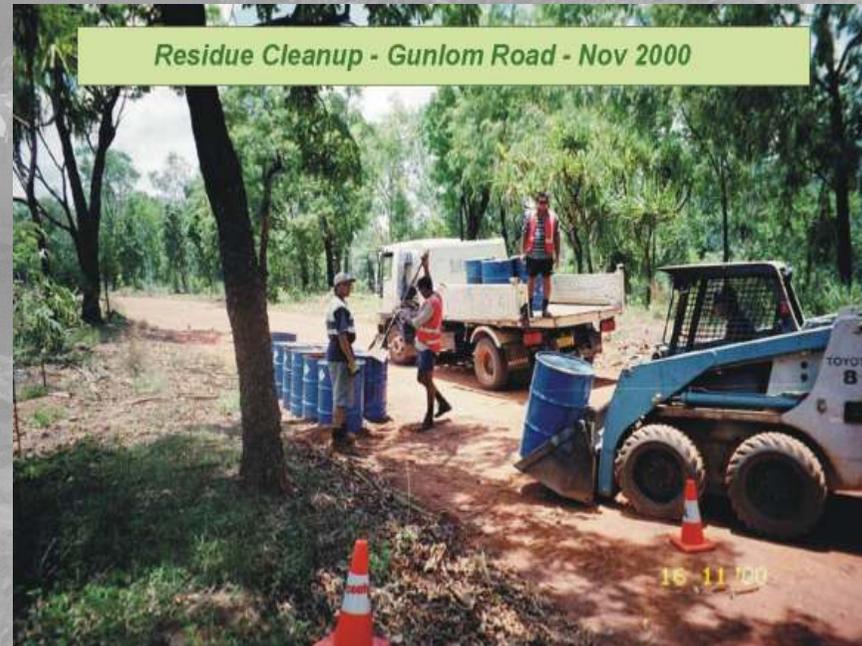
- Written up as we go
- Agreed as we go
- Photographed for report

– June 2009

SAV: Progress to date

- Meetings continue as required
- ATO inputs to planning & as cultural advisers, workers, operators, seed collection and planting
- Initial planning was completed in 2005
- Finance from Federal Government followed
- Final design completed in 2007
- Dry season 2007 work began on “A” sites
- Work completed
- Sites inspected in 2008
- Final design of containment finished
- Contractor selection imminent for final, “B” works

ATO involvement



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Sleisbeck open cut



Sleisbeck 1996 –
before



Sleisbeck 2007 –
after

Guratba (Coronation Hill) c. 1955



Guratba (Coronation Hill) c. 2000



Guratba (Coronation Hill) 2007





**December
2007**



June 2009

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Other communications

- Public days at the OSS offices, Jabiru Field Station and laboratories, mining sites
- Participation in Community Open Days
- Open door policy for stakeholder visitors
- Specific meetings for incidents etc
- Posters, pamphlets etc in local language
- Proactive, culturally sensitive, communication
- Links with local schools

The Rules for communication

- Start near the middle
- Admit mistakes
- Be open about any problems
- Discuss others concerns
- Be accountable – share control
- Be fair

Honesty and transparency above all

Summary

- Uranium mining stakeholders were poorly served until relatively recently
- Early “stakeholder” processes were too exclusive and effectively secret
- Modern system comes from an iterative process which is still developing
- Local involvement is vital
- Common principles but very site specific methods and needs must be taken into account

Conclusions

- Transparency of information is essential
- Have a set of operating “rules” and use them
- Remediation needs consultation at community level
- Hard work and resource hungry but it pays dividends
- Be patient and above all be honest - trust built over years can be lost in seconds and is very hard to regain
- It has taken time but it works – however no time for complacency as improvement is always possible!