

Environment Minister Robert Hill told the Senate that he had written to Western Australia's Primary Industry Minister, asking him to ensure that all environmental impacts from the dam proposal were assessed properly. He asked to be contacted before a decision was made to go ahead with the project, putting pressure on the State Government to follow the environmental process. (*WA, 26 August, p13*)

WA Minister for Resource Development, Colin Barnett, has suggested that the government want Aboriginal people to share in the benefits of the Ord River development. The Minister blamed the slow progress in getting agreement from Aboriginal people on the existence of a the native title claim over lands including the development area. (*W Aus, 6 Sept, p4*)

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MINING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

National

Director of the Minerals Council of Australia, Dick Wells, responding to comments by Shadow Treasurer, Gareth Evans, said that to argue for claimants of native title to have benefits beyond those available to other Australians, particularly pastoralists, is not likely to win broad community support and would, instead, cause conflict. (*Media Release, 14 August*)

Perth mining lawyer, Mr Michael Hunt, has suggested that resource companies were less concerned with the existence of native title than with validity of their rights to explore and develop prospective land. Mr Hunt recommended negotiating agreements with native title claimants. However, Mr Hunt said, overlapping claims presented serious impediments to negotiating agreements. (*Fin R, 22 Sept, p7*)*

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Northern Territory

Rio Tinto Kintyre Uranium Mine

Rio Tinto's Kintyre uranium project is said to have been officially put on hold because of falling uranium prices and delays in obtaining native title approvals. While native title approval has been delayed, with many other projects, because of negotiations over Native Title Act amendments, it is understood there are no substantial areas of conflict between Aboriginal people and the company. (*Aus, 18 August, p29 & 30*)

Energy Resources Australia and Jabiluka

Spokesperson for the Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation, Jacqui Katona, said the Mirrar people were investigating legal avenues to stop negotiations from proceeding before the case was heard and it became clear whether the 1982 mine leases were legal. (*Fin R, 28 August, p3*) Traditional

owners of the site, the Mirrar people, vowed to oppose the project. Ms Katona accused ERA of changing the design of the project at Jabiluka, making an 1982 agreement null and void. (*W Aus, 30 August, p11*)

Newcrest and Coronation Hill

Gold miner, Newcrest Ltd, has regained the right to mine inside Kakadu National Park, or to demand potentially huge compensation for the loss of its rights. The High Court decision overturns legislation put in place by the Hawke Labor Government to prevent mining at Coronation Hill. In the lead judgement, Justice Gummow said the extension of Kakadu National Park did not extinguish the mining tenements. (*Fin R, 15 August, p7*)*

The Attorney-Generals Department was reportedly preparing urgent advice to the Government on implications of the High Court decision on mining in Kakadu National Park. ANU constitutional law lecturer George Williams said the decision had implications for the Commonwealth's rights to acquire property particularly in the Territories. However, Mr Williams said that the decision does firmly suggest that compensation on just terms is an inescapable requirement if the Commonwealth wishes to amend the Native Title Act in a way that would extinguish or derogate from native title'. (*CT, 16 August, p4*)

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Western Australia

Rio Tinto - Yandicoogina

Rio Tinto Executive Chair, Bob Wilson, announced that development will begin on the Yandicoogina Project, to be managed by subsidiary, Hammersley Iron. Under its commitment to the Western Australian Government, Hamersley's production is capped until it commits to construction of a downstream iron ore processing plant, within seven years of the shipment of the first saleable ore from Yandicoogina. Approval for Hamersley's sixth mine comes after it won the support of Pilbara communities, working under the umbrella of the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation in return for a \$60 million compensation package. Gumala chairperson, Charlie Smith, said the development of Yandicoogina paved the way for the economic advancement and independence of the Bunjirra, Niapaili and Innawonga people. (*Aus, 18 Sept, p23*)*

Croesus Mining -Kalgoorlie

Executive Chair of Croesus Mining, Mr Ron Manners, has said that the planned upgrade of its Hannah South treatment plant is a compromise. Mr Manners said that Croesus would have preferred to proceed with a \$20 Million expansion but were held up by 'native title uncertainties'. While the area that Croesus is currently mining is not affected by any native title claims, tenements to the north and south are affected by up to eight claims. (*Aus, 14 Aug. p22*)

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Queensland

Century Zinc Mine

Century Zinc Managing Director, Ian Williams, said miners negotiating native title agreements will continue to face conflict with Aboriginal communities over the scope of compensation unless assisted by community leaders. Mr Williams said that the need to deal specifically with native title claimant groups in respect of the project area, while also attempting to provide economic development opportunities for others living in the same region, had potential to cause conflicts in communities and would continue to be a dilemma for the industry. Mr Williams argued that Aboriginal leadership could do more to help establish a sensible balance between native title and regional aspirations on this issue. (*Aus, 15 Sept, p29*)

Ely Bauxite Mine

A landmark Native Title agreement with Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal communities, has approved development of ALCAN aluminium's \$200 million Ely bauxite mine. The Director of Ely, Paul Clough, said a comprehensive but unsigned final agreement was now being circulated within the Mapoon and Napranum communities located just north of Weipa. Mr Clough said ALCAN supports the communities aspirations for land. (*Aus, 6 August, p25*)

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South Australia

Merritt Mining and Maralinga

Merritt Mining has secured a further five exploration licences in South Australia's Gawler Craton, bringing its total to twelve. The licences granted cover 6980 sq km of Maralinga lands. Merritt Mining Managing Director, Peter Andrews, said the land holdings showed similar characteristics to the gold and copper mineralisation found in Olympic Dam and had the potential to host similar significant ore deposits. The licences were granted following a year of negotiations with the Maralinga Tjarutja people which resulted in access clearance for the land in May. Mr Andrews said he hoped to begin exploration and calcrete sampling before December, with an access clearance program to be devised in conjunction with Maralinga representatives and anthropologists next month. (*Aus, 11 Sept, p27*)*

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AMENDMENTS

Opposition Leader, Kim Beazley, predicted that the 'devil' in the Native Title Amendment Bill 1997 'will be in the detail'. It was noted that the new legislation leaves the States and Territories with extensive powers to run their own native title regimes and allows a great deal of discretion for the Federal Minister. (*Rep, 1 August, p1*)