



## Petition

Registration No.	49
Title	Clean up and close McArthur River Mine
Presented on	16 September 2015
Presented by	Member for Daly
Referred to	Minister for Mines and Energy
Date referred	18 September 2015
Response due	17 March 2016
Response received	26 October 2015
Response to be presented	17 November 2015

### Petition

Glencore's open pit lead and zinc mine in the bed of the McArthur River is 50km south of the town of Borroloola. The river, controversially diverted around the expanding mine pit, is the lifeblood of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Residents, tourists and recreational fishers eat the river's abundant fish, and local pastoral stations and communities rely on its freshwater.

Last year the mine's waste rock dump caught fire due to reactive chemistry. The mine's Independent Monitor warned, if not fixed, major acid metalliferous drainage problems would leach sulphuric acid into surrounding waterways.

The mine's leaking tailings dam was found to be at risk of collapse and in 2014 high levels of lead were found in local fish stocks and 400 cattle had to be destroyed after drinking from a poisoned creek near the mine site.

Glencore is in breach of its operating conditions, continuing to discharge contaminated water in the McArthur River at double allowable limits. In response to revelations of major risks posed by its unlawful mining activities, Glencore has refused to pay an increased rehabilitation bond to ensure site clean up.

Freedom of Information requests by the McArthur River's Aboriginal Traditional Owners have revealed internal NT Government memos contained warnings that Glencore's actions would have 'catastrophic consequences' for downstream environment and communities. These warnings have been ignored by the NT Government.

McArthur River Traditional Owners are calling on the NT Government to act immediately to protect the river and local communities from Glencore's reckless actions:

- Prosecute operational breaches
- Stop production at McArthur River mine until contamination problems are solved and insist on mine rehabilitation and environmental clean up
- Cancel open pit expansion plans and backfill reactive waste rock

## **Response**

I note the concerns of the stakeholders and I can assure you that my Department of Mines and Energy (DME) has been working to address these concerns in cooperation with other government agencies and the operator, McArthur River Mining Pty Ltd (MRM). The Northern Territory (NT) Government takes its role as a regulator very seriously and is committed to ensuring environmental values and human health are protected whilst fostering a sustainable mining sector across the Territory.

The NT Government has recently required a significant increase in the security held for the mine site and will continue to follow the regulatory processes to ensure that the security held will match future changes in risk appropriately.

DME has undertaken detailed assessment and given conditional approval to specific aspects of the mine site to allow its continued operation until the completion of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.

The operator undertakes a comprehensive set of environmental monitoring programs across the mine site and its loading facility at Bing Bong. The data produced by these programs, along with detailed designs and documentation provided by the operator, are comprehensively reviewed by DME scientists and engineers, as well as contracted professionals who are experts in their field. All of the operator's actions and regulation by DME are overseen by the Independent Monitor on an annual basis. The next assessment report for the 2014 operational period is due to be publically released in early December 2015.

I would like to thank the petition organisers and the members of the public who have taken the time to sign it. The issues are complex and will require continued hard work by all parties to solve. However, I am confident of a positive outcome that will address the concerns of stakeholders.