

5 COMMUNICATION AND LIAISON

5.1 Introduction

Effective communication with all stakeholders is an integral component of the Supervising Scientist Division's functions. Keeping traditional owners and other Aboriginal people who live in the Alligator Rivers Region informed about SSD activities including the supervisory activities of the Office of the Supervising Scientist (*oss*) and the research and monitoring programs undertaken or managed by the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (*eriss*) is especially important. So too is communication with research partners and other stakeholders within government, industry, science and the general community in the context of the research and supervisory functions of the Division.

5.2 Research support and communication

SSD continues to be actively involved in a number of community engagement activities such as open days and festivals with local communities in Kakadu National Park and the Alligator Rivers Region. These activities strengthen SSD's relationship with local indigenous stakeholders, research organisations, non-governmental environmental groups and the general public.

General SSD communications activities are coordinated through the Business Support Unit and communication with indigenous stakeholders is managed by the Jabiru-based Aboriginal Communications Officer in conjunction with Jabiru Field Station and other SSD staff.

Events undertaken in the reporting period include community information, education and conference presentations. Specific and targeted liaison with Traditional Owners and other indigenous stakeholders continued to be a priority.

The 2007–08 program of community engagement activities included participation at the CSIRO Top End Science Fair for schoolchildren in Darwin, interactive displays at the Mahbilil Festival in Jabiru, informal information sessions with local traditional owners and hosting visits at the Jabiru Field Station.

The SSD web site is another important means of raising community awareness of the work of the Division and providing public access to some of the Division's scientific data and reports such as the results of the SSD environmental monitoring program. Of note, the biological monitoring section has undergone a substantial revision; papers from SSD's involvement in the Tropical Rivers Inventory and Assessment Project (TRIAP) are available through the TRIAP web pages; and about 85% of the Supervising Scientist Report series is available online in PDF format.

5.2.1 Indigenous employment and consultation

Employing Indigenous stakeholders in activities such as field research projects provides SSD staff with opportunities to work alongside landowners on their country, sharing knowledge and gaining greater insight into traditional cultural values. This also provides indigenous stakeholders the opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge and valuable technical skills and understanding of the research and monitoring program of the Supervising Scientist Division.

SSD has a dedicated Aboriginal Communications Officer (ACO) based at the Jabiru Field Station who is responsible for keeping Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Associations and the local community informed about SSD activities. Since joining SSD in August 2007, the present ACO has interacted with a range of key stakeholders in the region (including Aboriginal Associations and the NLC), and has continued the good work of previous ACOs in representing SSD at Gunbalanya and Jabiru schools, town festivals, Ranger mine training days and conference displays. As well as keeping stakeholders informed about SSD research and monitoring programs, the ACO coordinates local indigenous employment in SSD-related work activities in the Region, organises relevant staff and work permits (including the necessary consultations) and participates in SSD's research and monitoring fieldwork.

During the period, *eriss* staff worked alongside Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people throughout the Alligator Rivers Region (ARR) on various fieldwork activities including bush tucker, mussel and fish collection and general field station activities such as maintaining the aquaculture area. Much of the indigenous involvement in these activities has been organised with the assistance of the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation (GAC).



Figure 5.1 Collecting snails as part of the creekside monitoring program during the wet season

SSD has maintained regular informal contact with indigenous communities in the Region including the Mirarr people – the Traditional Owners of the land on which Ranger and Jabiluka lie – affording further opportunities for raising indigenous stakeholder awareness of the Division's role, functions and monitoring and research programs. This has included informal visits to, and from, local communities in the Region, and inviting interested indigenous people to observe SSD monitoring and research activities in the field and in the laboratory. During the period there were visits from the Mudginberri community, Kakadu Health Service and the NLC, regional and Darwin-based school groups, and the Kakadu Junior Ranger Program.



Figure 5.2 (Left) Kakadu Junior Ranger visit to JFS; (right) Staff from NLC and Kakadu Health Services and residents from Mudginberri at a creekside monitoring station

Having applied for permission to undertake research on Aboriginal land, and engaged the help of the residents in fieldwork, and invited local people to view our work, Divisional staff have a responsibility to follow up and report to stakeholders the results of these projects. The same water chemistry control charts that are posted on the SSD web site are taken by the ACO to indigenous communities in the Region to report on the levels of uranium and other parameters in the local creeks and provide clear explanations of the significance of these levels for human health and the environment.

SSD also communicates the outcomes of our research to indigenous organisations from further afield. In October 2007, the Head of *eriss*, Dr David Jones, provided a presentation on the Division's work to staff of the Central Land Council and a large group of Traditional Owners from Central Australia.

Cross-cultural training for SSD staff to enable more effective communication and working relations with indigenous people continues to be provided.



Figure 5.3 (Left) The Environmental Radioactivity program running an information session at Gunbalanya for local Aboriginal people; (right) cross-cultural training – gaining an insight into the complexity of family structure and the wide range of clans and languages in the Alligator Rivers Region.

5.2.2 Research protocols for Kakadu National Park

Details of proposed 2008–09 SSD research and monitoring activities within Kakadu National Park were circulated to relevant stakeholders in April 2008, as required under the protocols agreed by the Director of National Parks and the Supervising Scientist in 2004.

The protocols establish working arrangements to ensure effective and timely communication between *eriss* and Parks Australia staff, the Kakadu Board of Management and Traditional Owners in relation to *eriss* research and monitoring activities within Kakadu National Park.

During 2007–08, the protocols were revised to reflect and comply with the provisions of the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan 2007–2014* and the *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The updated protocols have been approved by the Kakadu Board of Management.

5.2.3 Internal communication

The Division supports effective internal communication between staff of all levels through regular staff and Program Leader meetings. Various working groups (eg Monitoring Support, Spatial Users and Technical Data Management) address important strategic business issues within the Division.

IiP (Investor in People) activities undertaken during 2007–2008 are described in Chapter 6.

SSD's internal newsletter *Newsbrief* is produced fortnightly and provides information on current Divisional activities in the Darwin and Jabiru offices, including articles on research, conferences attended, field trips and communication activities.

Intranet content has been migrated from the previous Objectify platform to the Department's new Sharepoint site. The SSD intranet team migrated the necessary content material, including a revised site structure, and had the site up and running in time for the official Departmental launch in April 2008. Sharepoint affords greater access to manage and create content and helps fulfil the Division's aim of devolving authorship, approvals and monitoring of the SSD intranet to a wider range of staff and more fully engaging them in the site's use and upkeep.

Delivery of the communication induction package for new starters at SSD makes extensive use of the intranet including departmental and divisional structure, communicating with Aboriginal people, an introduction to the department's and SSD's intranet and internet sites, *Newsbrief*, general staff and other regular meetings, committees, email groups, and communications resources.

The Department has implemented a new Project Management Framework that SSD has customised for its specific business needs. A project approval and management template has been designed and produced in consultation with staff, and training provided in its use. Sections on 'stakeholder consultation and management' and 'communication' integrate consideration of communication issues into all stages of the Division's project approvals and execution process.

There were two recipients from SSD of Australia Day Awards from the Department: the Jabiru Field Station and monitoring support team for exemplary teamwork, commitment, community spirit and professionalism during and immediately following a major flood event at Jabiru in 2007; and Mr Dave Walden for his excellent 25 y contribution to *eriss* research goals, in particular to the field of ecological risk assessment over the last several years.

5.2.4 Communication with technical stakeholders and the general community

A range of other communication and public affairs activities were undertaken by SSD staff during the year.

The Alligator Rivers Region Advisory Committee (ARRAC) and the Alligator Rivers Region Technical Committee (ARRTC) both held two meetings during the period. Further information on ARRAC and ARRTC activities is provided in Chapter 4 of this report.

Indigenous stakeholders and the Traditional Owners of Kakadu National Park are also kept informed on SSD activities through their involvement in these committees. Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) and the Northern Land Council (NLC) are both members of ARRAC. NLC is a stakeholder member of ARRTC and GAC is invited to attend as an observer. The Director of *eriss* is a member of the Kakadu Research Advisory Committee.

The CSIRO Top End Science Fair and the Mahbilil (Wind Festival) at Jabiru were again the major community engagement activities for the period.

The Science Fair supports young people's interest in science and provides a broader community service. The Fair also demonstrates the importance of science and its direct application to our everyday life. SSD provided a macro-invertebrate sorting demonstration at its stand at the Fair which provided the schoolchildren the opportunity to identify bugs and draw conclusions about the healthiness of the water samples.



Figure 5.4 (above) The SSD stand at Mahbilil – the DVD 'MyPlace' is showing in the background; (left) Top End Science Fair (Photo courtesy of Humpty Doo Primary School teacher Barbara Doukas and 4.5 class – reproduced with permission)

SSD's display at Mahbilil included demonstrations of a Geiger counter and an alpha-detector used by the Environmental Radioactivity program to detect alpha, beta and gamma rays emanating from general household items compared with uranium ore from Ranger.

Posters in Kunwinjku language were also presented dealing with issues such as radiation and bush tucker, together with a picture display showing preparation of samples for testing for various metals in mussels and fish.

All of these activities served to enhance awareness and understanding of the work and role of the Division and to raise SSD's profile within the local and wider community. These events also enabled SSD staff to provide information to local residents in a 'hands-on' practical manner.

5.3 National and international environmental protection activities

5.3.1 Environmental radiation protection

As a part of its Environment Program, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) held a consultants meeting in Vienna to prepare a report on communication strategies in uranium mining, with an emphasis on the communication of radiation related issues to stakeholder groups and the general public in particular. The meeting was held from 15–19 October 2007 at the Vienna International Centre and the IAEA Seibersdorf Laboratories just outside of Vienna. It included representatives from AREVA, the Brazilian Nuclear Energy Commission, the International Atomic Energy Agency, a German consultancy and a Supervising Scientist Division representative from the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

This meeting aimed at sharing communication experiences amongst the participants and to develop a consultancy report on 'State of the art on communication strategies in uranium mining'. Various presentations provided an insight into what other organisations' strategies are when communicating radiation issues. Bruce Ryan from SSD's Environmental Radioactivity program gave a presentation on the Division's experiences in communicating radiation issues to Aboriginal people in the Alligator Rivers Region of northern Australia and the unique problems faced by the Supervising Scientist Division. The consultancy report has since been published by IAEA.

5.3.2 Kakadu National Park Landscape Change Symposia series

eriss is assisting Parks Australia to organise and deliver several of the 2007–08 Kakadu National Park Landscape Change Symposia series. These symposia are hosted by Parks Australia and are management-focused workshops on agents of change in Kakadu National Park. The aims of the symposia are to serve as a forum for knowledge exchange between stakeholders in the Kakadu region, including identifying management issues, emerging threats, knowledge gaps and research needs pertaining to landscape management at local, regional and national scales. *eriss* staff were involved with organisation of the technical programs for the Landscape Change and Weed Management symposia and delivering or contributing to presentations and workshop sessions at these symposia.

The first Landscape Change Symposium was run in April 2007 and a proceedings published by SSD in the second half of 2007 (SSD Internal Report no 532). *eriss* staff presented two papers at the Weed Management Symposium held in November 2007 at the SSD Jabiru Field

Station. *eriss* was represented at the Fire Management Symposium held in April 2008 and participated in a workshop on fire and weeds in wetlands.

5.3.3 AusAID Public Sector Linkage Program (PSLP) Projects

In 2007, SSD completed an AusAID Public Sector Linkages Program (PSLP) Activity involving the development and delivery of a training program for mining environmental officers from the Indonesian Ministry of Environment (MoE) and provincial environmental protection agencies. The Activity was a collaboration between SSD, Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Northern Territory Government (DPIFM, NRETA/EPA).

The Activity comprised a training course in Darwin (20 November – 15 December, reported in SSAR 2006–07) and a 10-day follow-up visit by two Australian officials to Indonesia from 19–31 August 2007. The aim of the follow-up visit was to provide subsequent assistance, advice and feedback on the course learnings and relevant issues in mining environmental regulation and monitoring. The two Australian officials who visited Indonesia, Dr David Jones (Supervising Scientist Division) and Mr David Dettrick (NT Department of Natural Resources Environment and the Arts, NRETA) were involved in various activities including:

- discussions on the progress towards developing a curriculum for a training course to be run locally and rolled out to other Indonesian MoE and provincial environmental regulators, and review of draft course curriculum;
- workshops on various topics related to minesite condition and rehabilitation, with a focus on site contamination criteria, rehabilitation criteria and water quality, with several presentations on these issues;
- a visit to MoE's training centre and analytical reference and services laboratories to review facilities available for the training course; and
- an inspection visit to a medium sized coal mine, PT Indominco Mandiri, in Bodang in East Kalimantan to compare and discuss Australian perceptions of the company's environmental performance with that of the Indonesian regulators.

Another AusAID funded mining environmental training program, 'Life of mine planning – sustainable development principles and practices', was run in Jakarta on 19–22 November 2007. This event (co-organised by the Australian Government Department of Industry Tourism and Resources and the Indonesian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, and run under the auspices of the APEC Mining Taskforce) was linked to the PSLP project through the involvement of Dr David Jones as a presenter, and attendance by several of the PSLP participants from the MoE. Delegates from six south-east Asian economies, including Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam, Phillipines and Laos, attended this three-day event.

5.3.4 Basslink

SSD staff, as Australian Government representatives on the Gordon River Scientific Reference Committee, provided comment on the 2006–07 Basslink Monitoring Annual Report. SSD staff also provided advice to the committee on development of a decision tree

to establish an integrated approach to determining ecological trigger breaches resulting from Basslink influence on the Gordon River (Tasmania).

5.3.5 Contribution to the Northern Australian Taskforce and Futures Assessment

Dr David Jones made a presentation to the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce (Taskforce) in Darwin at the end of July 2007. The key findings from the Tropical Rivers Inventory and Assessment Project (TRIAP) described in Section 3.12 were summarised, and strategic issues affecting development of water resources in the tropical north canvassed. Subsequently *eriss* was commissioned by the Department (via its Northern Australia Land and Water Futures Assessment group) to develop a GIS-based knowledge management system that would assist the members of the Taskforce with their brief.

5.4 Science communication

Results of research and investigations undertaken by the Supervising Scientist Division are made available to key stakeholders and the scientific and wider community through publication in journals and conference papers, and in a range of in-house journals and reports including the Supervising Scientist and Internal Report series – for detailed reporting on scientific projects – and the Supervising Scientist Note series used to showcase specific projects to a wider audience. Other media such as posters and educational or promotional materials are also produced to suit specific requirements or events.

To improve the level of service to our stakeholders we have implemented a web site subscription facility incorporating an automatic email notification when a new SSD publication is released. Nearly all the Supervising Scientist Report series is now available in PDF format on the SSD web site, greatly expediting public access to the Division's published resources. The move towards electronic distribution supports the Department's policy of reducing its environmental footprint.

SSD staff helped organise and present at various local conferences, workshops, seminars and lectures, both at our facilities and in partnership with other research organisations and professional bodies, illustrating our commitment to the advancement of professional practice and communication of our work. It is also an important part of our contribution to the local scientific and professional communities. Specifically, SSD was involved in organising and participating in the Kakadu National Park Landscape Change Symposium Series (see Section 5.3.2) and the 2nd Australian Radiochemistry Workshop and the AUSRIVAS macroinvertebrate sampling training course both at SSD in August 2007.

Staff of the Division have published articles in a wide range of external journals and presented papers and posters at over 18 conferences and workshops. A full list of papers and reports published during 2007–08 is provided in Appendix 2. Papers presented at national and international conferences are listed in Appendix 3.

SSD staff participated in several international conferences, seminars and workshops during 2007–08 (Table 5.1). Attendance at the majority of these events was funded, either partly or

fully, from external sources. Participation in international events allows staff to share their knowledge and expertise with peers and maintain awareness of international best practice in relevant areas. Participation is also seen as important in allowing the Supervising Scientist Division to maintain its profile as a part of the broader scientific and technical community.

TABLE 5.1 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS, 2007–08

Event	Location	Date
IAEA Environment Program consultants meeting on communication strategies in uranium mining	Vienna, Austria	October 2007
28th Asian Remote Sensing Conference	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	November 2007
Annual Conference of the NZ Freshwater Sciences Society and the Australian Society for Limnology	Queenstown, New Zealand	December 2007
Minewater and the Environment, 10th International Mine Water Association Congress	Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic	June 2008

In 2007–08, *eriss* staff supervised a number of post-graduate research projects involving students from Charles Darwin University and other universities around Australia. In addition, a number of the Division's staff contribute to external scientific, technical and other professional organisations, including various editorial boards and panels. *eriss* also hosts researchers from other organisations to undertake collaborative funded projects, or for sabbatical periods.

Senior SSD staff facilitated a presentation to the Uranium Mining, Processing and Nuclear Energy Review Taskforce during a brief visit to SSD at the end of a research and fact-finding trip that included a visit to the Ranger mine, and sessions with the NT Chief Minister and the Northern Land Council.

Dr David Jones has continued as the departmental representative on the steering committee for the Leading Practice Sustainable Development Program for the Mining Industry funded and managed by the Australian Government Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism. The program was established in 2005 to support the sustainable development of the Australian minerals industry, and its outputs are a series of booklets documenting leading practice sustainable development principles in most of the major social and environmental management areas of concern to the community and to the industry.