

7 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

7.1 Human resource management

7.1.1 Supervising Scientist

The Supervising Scientist is a statutory position created under the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978*. The position has been held by Dr Arthur Johnston since June 1999.

7.1.2 Structure

The organisational structure of the Supervising Scientist Division, which is part of the Department of the Environment and Heritage, is shown in Figure 7.1.

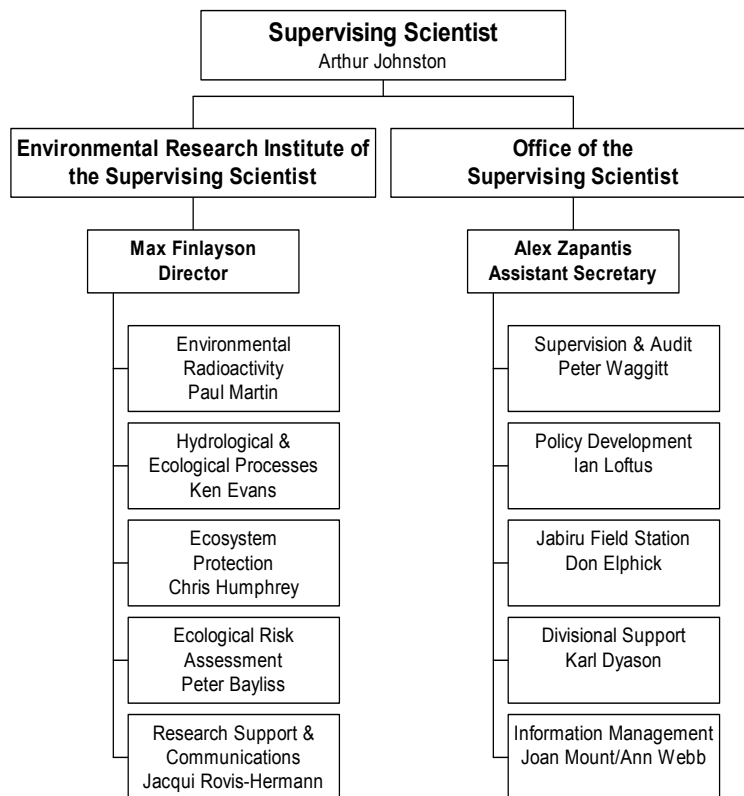


Figure 7.1 Organisational structure of the Supervising Scientist Division

Staffing numbers for 2002–03 are given in Table 7.1.

TABLE 7.1 STAFFING NUMBERS AND LOCATIONS (AT 30 JUNE 2003)

	2001/02	2002/03
Darwin	20	37
Jabiru	24	6
Canberra	2	0
Total	46	43

7.1.3 Investors in People

The Supervising Scientist Division has continued to support IiP initiatives with a focus on implementing and maintaining systems that benefit staff and encourage improved performance. SSD has maintained its commitment to staff training and development. Funds were allocated for development purposes and staff were actively encouraged to pursue development opportunities. A regimen of staff meetings to facilitate efficient communication across SSD was implemented. There was a particular focus on the need to ensure adequate communication between the Darwin facility and the Jabiru Field Station. Video conferencing equipment for installation at the Jabiru Field Station is being purchased to facilitate better communication between Darwin and Jabiru. These communication initiatives were undertaken in parallel with the commencement of the development of a Communication Strategy for SSD. The SSD seminar series was well supported by staff and visitors and workplanning processes based upon staff consultation were completed for *eriss* and *oss*. SSD staff have continued to participate in the Performance Development Scheme and to promote ongoing informal feedback within the organisation. The SSD Investors in People Action Group has reported an increased interest with representatives from all programs and senior management attending discussions to ensure the organisation strives to maintain accreditation and improve the management of people within the Division.

7.1.4 Occupational Health and Safety

The Supervising Scientist Division continued to maintaining a strong commitment to occupational health and safety issues during 2002–03. The Occupational Health and Safety Committee is the primary mechanism in place for the discussion of issues. This staff-based Committee meets on a monthly basis to consider health and safety issues that arise from time to time. The Committee makes recommendations to the Division's senior management team in relation to specific occupational health and safety issues.

7.2 Finance

The Supervising Scientist Division is part of the Department of the Environment and Heritage. Full financial statements are contained in the Department's Annual report.

Table 7.2 provides a summary of the cost of Outputs.

TABLE 7.2 SUMMARY OF COST OF OUTPUTS

PBS Output	2001–02 (\$000)	2002–03 (\$000)
1.6 Industry	\$8.473	\$9.031
1.7 Inland waters	\$1.478	\$1.884

7.3 Facilities

7.3.1 Darwin facility

The majority of the Supervising Scientist Division's staff are situated at the Department of the Environment and Heritage's Darwin facility adjacent to Darwin International Airport. This facility consists of office accommodation and laboratory facilities. The office space is shared with Parks Australia North.

eriss laboratories were relocated from Jabiru to Darwin in August 2002. One of this year's priorities will be to dispose of surplus laboratory equipment and either find a new use for some of the Jabiru facilities or begin rehabilitation of unused areas.



Figure 7.2 The new Department of the Environment and Heritage facility

The new Darwin facility was officially opened on 25 November 2002 by the Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

7.3.2 Jabiru Field Station

A Field Station at Jabiru with six employees is maintained for monitoring purposes:

- the monitoring team that carry out the Supervising Scientist's environmental monitoring programme consists of three staff;

- one employee is responsible for delivering the Supervising Scientist's Aboriginal Communications programme in Jabiru;
- one employee undertakes administrative and financial duties; and
- the Field Station Manager, who has overall responsibility for managing the Field Station as well as supervisory and inspection responsibilities.

7.3.3 Library

The Supervising Scientist's Library is now located at the Department of the Environment and Heritage's facility in Darwin. The library provides services to staff based in Jabiru and Darwin and is open to the public by appointment.

The subject matter of the collection reflects the research interests of the Supervising Scientist. The collection includes 11 600 books, reports and audio-visual items, including 158 which were added during 2002–03, and scientific journals (63 current subscriptions).

As well, the library maintains special collections (with supporting databases) of materials published on the Alligator Rivers Region, media reports, and scientific papers relevant to the work of the Supervising Scientist.

7.4 Interpretation of Ranger Environmental Requirements

Section 19.2 of the Environmental Requirements of the Commonwealth of Australia for the Operation of the Ranger Uranium Mine provides for the publication of explanatory material agreed to by the major stakeholders to assist in the interpretation of provisions of the Environmental Requirements.

No explanatory material was published by the Supervising Scientist during 2002–03.

7.5 Ministerial Directions

There were no Ministerial Directions issued to the Supervising Scientist under section 7 of the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act* (the Act) during 2002–03.

However, during the year, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage requested that the Supervising Scientist provide advice under section 5B of the Act as part of the process of assessing an Environmental Impact Statement under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.

On 12 February 2003, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon Dr David Kemp MP, requested that the Supervising Scientist provide scientific and technical advice on certain aspects of a proposal to construct a National Radioactive Waste Repository (NRWR). The specific issue on which advice was sought was the risk to the proposed repository associated with activities of the Department of Defence in the Woomera Instrumented Range in South Australia.

The Supervising Scientist provided a report to the Minister on this issue on 21 March 2003. This report, entitled ‘Review of risk assessments associated with the proposal to establish a national radioactive waste repository’, was attached to the Assessment Report of the EIS produced by the Department of the Environment and Heritage and was subsequently published as Supervising Scientist Report Number 174.

7.6 Ecologically Sustainable Development: Reporting under Section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

7.6.1 How the activities of the Supervising Scientist Division, and the administration of legislation, accord with the principles of ESD

Oversight of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region and research into the impacts of uranium mining are carried out under the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act*. These activities are for the long-term protection of the environment and health of the community.

Research into and assessment of threats to biodiversity and functioning of wetlands in the Alligator Rivers Region enhances protection of significant ecosystems in the region.

The Supervising Scientist’s Strategic Plan and workplans include the development of programmes for the dissemination of information and opportunities (such as employment) to local Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders.

Information to stakeholders is also disseminated through Supervising Scientist reports, published journal papers, conferences, and direct consultation. Two national committees established under legislation facilitate consultation.

7.6.2 Outcomes specified in a relevant Appropriations Act that contribute to ESD

Ensure the protection of people from radiation during mining activities and following rehabilitation of uranium mines in the Alligator Rivers Region.

Ensure, during mining and after minesite rehabilitation, that Kakadu National Park is protected from the potential impacts of uranium mining and that environmental impacts on minesites in the Alligator Rivers Region are minimised.

Undertake research on the environmental impacts of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region and on the conservation and management of Wetlands.

No significant environmental impacts or health impacts were detected offsite during the year as a consequence of mining operations in the Alligator Rivers Region.

7.6.3 The effects of Supervising Scientist Division activities on the environment

Positive effects

- designed and implemented improved environmental monitoring programmes for Ranger and Jabiluka;
- analysed and published data related to radionuclides in flora and fauna of the Alligator Rivers Region, in particular in relation to Aboriginal bush foods;
- acquired chemical and biological baseline/monitoring data from the Jabiluka region for the purpose of monitoring and assessing the impact of any existing disturbance or future mining at Jabiluka on adjacent streams and floodplain;
- improved infrastructure for creekside monitoring to provide greater reliability of testing procedures;
- contributed to a landscape-wide monitoring programme to assess the impact of the proposed Jabiluka mine upon the broader Kakadu landscape, through:
 - field sampling of significant aquatic (stone country) habitats and native species around Jabiluka and elsewhere. This sampling involved local aboriginal people and landowners, including the Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation;
 - assessing whether fish communities in Gulungul Creek had changed over a 22-year period as a consequence of mining activities in the catchment;
- supported *nctwr* activities in tropical wetlands, through:
 - completion of a Handbook for the Australian Centre for Mining Environmental Research (ACMER) on implementing the new Water Quality Guidelines;
 - conduct of a consultancy for the Porgera Joint Venture in PNG, examining the macroinvertebrates in highland tributary streams of the Strickland River near Porgera, and their potential use for monitoring;
 - conduct of a consultancy for DIPE reviewing options for monitoring fish biodiversity in the Darwin Harbour catchment;
- developed a technological framework to assess the impact of minesite erosion products on stream systems;
- characterised and mapped landscapes in the Alligator Rivers Region for the purpose of environmental impact and risk assessment;
- continued to refine and develop ecotoxicological procedures using local aquatic species;
- assessed threats to marine and coastal ecosystems in the Alligator Rivers Region and regional implications, through:
 - assessing the composition and structure of mangrove vegetation at the mouth of the East Alligator River in 1981 and 1993, providing long-term data to assess the effects of climate change on coastal ecosystems;

- having *eriss* become a member of the Arafura Timor Sea Experts Forum (ATSEF), along with the Australian National University, the National Oceans Office, NGOs, the Northern Territory Government, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Indonesia, East Timor and Papua New Guinea. ATSEF is currently seeking international funds (UNDP, GEF) to initiate pilot ‘catchment-to-coast-to-sea’ studies in sub-regional countries;
- having *eriss* obtain a position on the Board of the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), an international process (funded by the World Bank and the United Nations) that monitors the consequences of ecosystem change on human well-being. The Alligator Rivers Region has been nominated as a case study for the MA sub-regional assessments; and
- *eriss* (via the *nctwr*) having a letter of agreement with the National Oceans Office to host their Northern Region Liaison Officer at the Jabiru Field Station to facilitate research collaboration. A project proposal is being developed to undertake ecological risk assessments on coastal environments of major mines in the Gulf of Carpentaria.
- developed an ecosystem model of wetlands of the Alligator Rivers Region to be used as a decision support tool for ecological risk assessment and management;
- integrated socio-economic frameworks and indigenous perspectives into ecological risk assessment and management frameworks, through, for example:
 - documenting Traditional Owner perceptions of feral animal damage and benefits on Kakadu National Park; and
 - assessing the socio-economic, cultural and environmental ‘trade-offs’ between feral pig damage and potential commercial gain in collaboration with Traditional Owners and Park staff.
- identified and coordinated the involvement and employment of local and other Aboriginal people in monitoring and research programmes;
- developed interactive methods to disseminate information on monitoring and research to stakeholders, for example:
 - interactive consultations are held with Aboriginal Association members, informal feedback sessions and discussions have occurred regularly; and
 - two information sessions on *eriss* research at Nabarlek were held in Gunbalunya.
- environment management initiatives of the Department of the Environment and Heritage also apply to the Supervising Scientist Division.

Negative or neutral effects:

- Research requires the collection of vertebrate and invertebrate samples for toxicity testing. The effect on the environment is negligible.

7.6.4 Measures taken by the Supervising Scientist Division to minimise the effect of its activities on the environment

Staff require professional qualifications to undertake the specialised work. Consultants are engaged when there is insufficient time or expertise within the Division.

Workplans are prepared each year and focus on the roles of the Supervising Scientist under the legislation. The roles have strong environmental and ESD components.

An Environmental Policy has been developed in conjunction with Parks Australia North for the Darwin facility. An Environmental Management System is under development.

7.6.5 Mechanisms for reviewing the effectiveness of these measures

An internal report reviewing performance against workplans and outputs.

A comprehensive research summary and report on progress to the Alligator Rivers Region Technical Committee.

Quarterly reports on performance, against performance indicators, are compiled.

The Annual report outlines performance for the year.

7.6.6 Sources

The Supervising Scientist's Annual Report is published on the Internet on the Department of the Environment and Heritage's website. The report sets out the performance against each objective established under the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978*.

7.7 Animal experimentation ethics approvals

eriss seeks the approval of the Northern Territory University's *Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee* for approval to undertake scientific experiments involving animals.

Table 7.3 provides information on new applications, renewals of approvals and approvals not renewed during 2002–03.

TABLE 7.3 ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION ETHICS APPROVALS

Project Title	Reference No.	Expiry Date	Comments
Larval fish toxicity testing at <i>eriss</i>	97016	30 November 2002	Not renewed
Ecological effects of magnesium sulphate in Magela Creek	A00019	14 November 2002	Not renewed
Natural fish kills in the Alligator Rivers Region	A00027	27 February 2003	Renewal of earlier approval
Monitoring mining impact using the structure of fish communities in shallow billabongs	A00028	27 February 2003	Renewal of earlier approval
Djerk wetlands freshwater fish survey	A00029	14 November 2002	Not renewed
Radionuclides in freshwater fish of Swift Creek	A00031	18 April 2004	Renewal of earlier approval
Effect of tailings leakage from Rock Hole Mine into the South Alligator River system on the fitness for consumption of Aboriginal foods	A00032	30 November 2002	Not renewed
Survival of larval fishes in creekside monitoring tests, Magela Creek	A00034	14 November 2004	Renewal of earlier approval
Identification of traditional Aboriginal foods for radiological assessment	A02002	28 February 2004	New application and approval
Metal and radionuclide concentrations of fish and mussels associated with the Ranger mine	A02026	27 February 2005	New application and approval