

4 STATUTORY COMMITTEES

4.1 Introduction

During 2006–07, the Supervising Scientist Division provided secretariat and administrative support to two statutory committees: the Alligator Rivers Region Advisory Committee and the Alligator Rivers Region Technical Committee.

These committees play important roles in facilitating discussion and information exchange between stakeholders in relation to the Division’s environmental supervision and assessment activities, and facilitating peer review of the associated scientific research activities.

4.2 Alligator Rivers Region Advisory Committee

The Alligator Rivers Region Advisory Committee (ARRAC) was established under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978* to promote communication between government, industry and community stakeholders on environmental issues associated with uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region.

ARRAC is chaired by Professor Charles Webb, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) at Charles Darwin University and includes members representing the following stakeholder organisations:

- NT Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines
- NT Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts
- NT Department of Health and Community Services
- NT Office of the Administrator
- Australian Government Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources
- Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency
- Energy Resources of Australia Ltd
- Cameco Australia
- Hanson Pty Ltd
- Koongarra Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of AREVA
- Northern Land Council
- Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation
- Environment Centre Northern Territory
- Jabiru Town Council
- Parks Australia North
- Supervising Scientist Division

ARRAC offers a valuable forum for stakeholders to exchange views and relevant information on the issues that relate to environmental protection and rehabilitation from the effects of uranium mining.

Public disclosure of environmental performance data through ARRAC is an important means of ensuring transparency and enhancing trust between the various stakeholder organisations. Information reports are also provided by each of the stakeholder organisations at each ARRAC meeting which facilitates knowledge sharing and reduces potential misinformation. Information reports usually include a summary and interpretation of monitoring data, details of periodic environmental reports from mining companies and the outcomes of audit and assessment activity. SSD provides a comprehensive report to each ARRAC meeting.

A link to the summary records of previous meetings is available on the ARRAC web site at www.environment.gov.au/ssd/communication/committees/arrac/meeting.html.

ARRAC met twice during 2006–07: in Jabiru in August 2006 and in Darwin in April 2007. Key issues considered by ARRAC during these meetings included:

- water management issues at the Ranger mine, including the water treatment plant and water management strategies;
- the impact at Ranger of the intense rainfall event during February–March 2007;
- the results of chemical, biological and radiological monitoring for Ranger and Jabiluka;
- the outcomes of environmental audits and assessments of Ranger, Jabiluka and Nabarlek;
- the outcomes of Minesite Technical Committee (MTC) meetings;
- the status of South Alligator Valley mine rehabilitation;
- the key projects being undertaken at Ranger mine;
- the changes to the *Radiation Protection Act* and National Directory for Radiation Protection;
- the Uranium Industry Framework;
- the Northern Land Council’s work with the Alligator Rivers Region stakeholders and traditional owners;
- the International Commission on Radiation Protection (ICRP) radiation protection recommendations.

4.3 Alligator Rivers Region Technical Committee

The Alligator Rivers Region Technical Committee (ARRTC) was established under the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978*.

ARRTC plays an important role in ensuring the scientific research conducted by *eriss*, ERA, NT Government agencies and others into the protection of the environment from the

impacts of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region is relevant and of an appropriately high standard. ARRTC also reviews the quality of the science used by *oss* and DPIFM to assess and approve proposals by uranium mining companies in the Alligator Rivers Region.

ARRTC reports openly, independently and without restriction. Further details on the outcomes of previous ARRTC meetings are available on the ARRTC web site at www.environment.gov.au/ssd/communication/committees/arrtc/index.html.

Members of ARRTC are appointed by the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water Resources and include:

- an independent Chair (Mr Ray Evans);
- the Supervising Scientist;
- a number of independent scientific members with specific expertise nominated by the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS);
- representatives from the Northern Land Council, the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines, Energy Resources of Australia Ltd (for Ranger and Jabiluka), Hanson Pty Ltd (for Nabarlek) and Parks Australia North.

Two of the independent scientific members of the committee have resigned since the last report. They are Mrs Jill Fitch and Dr Keith Hayes. Professor Peter Johnston has replaced Mrs Fitch as a member of ARRTC. Recruitment of a replacement for Dr Hayes is in progress.

ARRTC met twice during 2006–07: in October 2006 and March 2007. Both meetings were held in Darwin. The key issues considered by ARRTC during these meetings included:

- the current and proposed research activities by *eriss* and ERA, in the context of the ARRTC Key Knowledge Needs;
- the chemical, biological and radiological research and monitoring being conducted by DPIFM, ERA and the Supervising Scientist;
- scientific and technical issues relating to Ranger, Jabiluka and Nabarlek;
- the status of South Alligator Valley rehabilitation activities;
- activity reports from the various stakeholder organisations.

At its March 2007 meeting, ARRTC commenced a review of its Key Knowledge Needs which are an important basis for prioritising and planning the environmental and mining-related scientific research activities undertaken by the relevant stakeholder organisations. The ARRTC Key Knowledge Needs for the period 2006–07 are included at Appendix 1 of this Annual Report.