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 living 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 programmes undertaken or managed by the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (***eriss***) is especially important. Communication with research partners and other stakeholders within government, industry, science and the general community is also vital in the context of the research and supervisory functions of the Division.

5.2 Research support and communication

During 2006–07, communication staff continued to provide support across the research and monitoring programmes through new and existing internal communication activities and by stakeholder consultation on SSD activities within the Alligator Rivers Region. Links continue to be built and strengthened with research partners and other groups and networks to promote the work of ***oss***, ***eriss*** and the Supervising Scientist within the scientific community.

SSD was 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 the relationship with the local Aboriginal community and with research organisations, non-governmental environmental groups and the general public.

SSD communications activities are coordinated through the Business Support Unit and directed by a Communications Steering Group. Communication with indigenous people was led by the Jabiru-based Aboriginal Communications Officer in conjunction with SSD staff. A non-ongoing part-time staff member was appointed in January 2007 to assist with publications, intranet, internet and general communications activities.

5.2.1 Communication activities and the CSG

In September 2006, a Communications Steering Group (CSG) was established to provide overall direction for the Division's communications activities.

Communication activities that CSG is responsible for include development and implementation of the SSD communications framework, community engagement activities, media training and communication inductions for SSD staff, the internal staff newsletter *Newsbrief* and ongoing development and maintenance of SSD web and intranet sites.

One of CSG's key first tasks was to develop a communications framework for the Division. SSD communication activities were characterised into four main groupings and target

audience, objectives, champions and activities were identified for each group. The framework will help in planning and reviewing the Division's communication effort.

A second important task was to review and assess past community engagement activities including aim, audience, resources, timing and benefit, and develop and implement a programme of community engagement activities for 2007.

These included participation and a display booth at the AusIMM Uranium Conference (Darwin May 2007), the CSIRO Top End Science Fair in Darwin in August (supporting young people's interest in science and providing a broader community service), the Mahbilil Festival in Jabiru in September, and continuing the successful informal information sessions with local traditional owners. The theme selected for 2006–07 was 'Ensuring the environment of the Alligator Rivers Region remains protected from uranium mining activities'. A sub-group of CSG developed a short new brochure about the functions of SSD for general use – its first release was at the AusIMM Uranium Conference.

The SSD web site is an 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 programme. More than half of the Supervising Scientist Report series is now available online in PDF format. The Tropical Rivers Inventory and Assessment Project (TRIAP) is now hosted on the SSD web site.

SSD's intranet is discussed in section 5.2.3 (Internal communication).

In June 2007, media training was provided for SSD senior executive and other staff including interview techniques for staff who may be required to deal with the media on incidents or activities undertaken by the Supervising Scientist.

5.2.2 Indigenous employment and consultation

Indigenous employment for activities such as field research projects gives SSD staff the opportunity to work alongside landowners on their country, sharing knowledge and gaining greater insight into traditional cultural values. It is also an opportunity for indigenous people to gain first hand knowledge and valuable technical skills and understanding of the research and monitoring programme of the Supervising Scientist Division.

During 2006–07, traditional owners and other local Aboriginal people participated in activities such as maintaining the aquaculture area, preparation for the creekside monitoring programme, mussel and fish collection, pop-netting, soil analogue and macroinvertebrate sampling, bush tucker collection and general field station activities.

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 more opportunity for understanding of our role and function and helping us keep the local communities well informed about our monitoring and research programmes. Informal contact has also involved visits to and from local communities in the Region, including interested indigenous people observing our monitoring and research activities both in the field and in the laboratory.

Figure 5.1 (left) Setting up of pop-nets at sample sites within crocodile nets. **Figure 5.2** (right) Jabiru Field Station crew in 2006–07 with Aboriginal Communications Officer, Sally-Anne Atkins, front left, and Anthony Sullivan, Communications and Monitoring Support Officer, front right.

Another example of successful informal contact is the information session at Gunbalanya for local Aboriginal people. This activity is run annually by the Environmental Radioactivity Programme within ***eriss***.

Regular communication with the Northern Land Council and Parks Australia North ensures stakeholders are provided with information on the research, monitoring and supervisory activities being undertaken by the Division. SSD has also ensured on-going collaborative engagement of Aboriginal people in the closure planning process through participation in consultation meetings organised by the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation (GAC), and employment of Aboriginal people in projects associated with development of closure criteria, such as the collection of macroinvertebrates aimed at developing surface water quality closure criteria for Ranger billabongs.

Information about the work of the Division has been delivered in local indigenous language, in the process strengthening SSD's relationship and ability to communicate with traditional owners and other indigenous people in the Region. In another initiative, a DVD was produced and shown at Mahbilil (the Jabiru Wind Festival) that explains SSD's research and monitoring activities.

SSD has a dedicated Aboriginal Communications Officer (ACO) based at the Jabiru Field Station whose role is to keep traditional owners, Aboriginal Associations and the local community informed about the activities of the Supervising Scientist. The officer regularly updates stakeholders about the outcomes of the various research and monitoring programmes and coordinates the employment of local Aboriginal people in SSD-related work activities in the Alligator Rivers Region. The ACO is also responsible for organising the various staff and work permits (including consultations) and actively participates in SSD's research and monitoring field work.

5.2.3 Internal communication

Regular staff and programme leader meetings provide a forum for communication of information between SSD staff at all levels. The formation of support groups (eg Creekside Monitoring Support, Spatial Users, Knowledge Management) to address important strategic

business issues has also enhanced communication of important information around the Division.

IiP (Investor in People) activities undertaken during 2006–2007 are described in chapter 6.

The Division's internal newsletter *Newsbrief* is produced fortnightly by SSD communications staff and provides information on current Divisional activities in the Darwin and Jabiru offices. It contains articles on research, field trips and communication activities that are sourced from staff, profiles and photos of new starters, and a diary of upcoming events and staff movements. The 100th edition of *Newsbrief* was produced in December 2006. During 2006–07, SSD staff were surveyed on their perceptions of the role and value of *Newsbrief* in the workplace. Based on the very positive responses that were received, the production of *Newsbrief* will be continued.

Business Support Unit staff have continued to develop the SSD intranet site, expanding the information on offer and integrating more fully with other parts of the DEW intranet. During 2006–07, an intranet framework was developed and implemented that devolves authorship, approvals and monitoring of sections of the SSD intranet to a wider range of staff to more fully engage them in the upkeep and use of the site. The site was officially launched in December 2006 with a short presentation to staff.

The communication induction package for new starters at SSD has been redesigned – and its delivery now makes extensive use of the new intranet. The induction includes DEW and SSD structure, services provided by SSD communications and CSG, communicating with Aboriginal people, and an introduction to the intranet, web site, *Newsbrief*, general staff and other regular meetings, committees, email groups, and communications resources such as posters, brochures, publications and the SSD banner.

5.2.4 Communication with technical stakeholders and the general community

Coordination of other communication and general public relations activities was facilitated by SSD staff throughout the year. The Division participated in a number of event-based communication activities and an information booth was hosted at the AusIMM Uranium Conference in Darwin in May 2007.

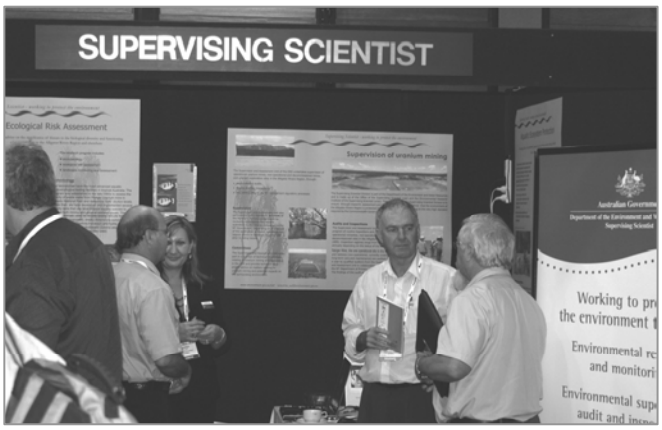

Figure 5.3 SSD staff and conference delegates at the SSD booth at the AusIMM Uranium Conference, May 2007

The AusIMM Uranium Conference provided a good opportunity to raise SSD's profile and to find out more about opportunities and challenges facing the Australian uranium mining industry. SSD's booth in the conference exhibition space was very well attended by delegates and many enquiries were handled by SSD staff mainly related to ***oss***'s supervisory role and aspects of ***eriss***'s research work. Four papers were presented (see Appendix 3 for details).

The Supervising Scientist gave an interview to a Finnish television company in October 2006 on the subject of environmental protection from the effects of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region over the past 27 years. The TV crew also visited Ranger mine and talked to traditional owners from the Mirarr clan group. Apparently, there had been interest from large international mining companies from UK, France and USA in mining uranium in Finland again (uranium was mined in Finland in the 1950s and 60s).

The twice a year meetings of the Alligator Rivers Region Advisory Committee (ARRAC) meetings bring together members and observers from various stakeholder groups and provide a forum for information exchange on activities in the Region and opportunity to discuss concerns. The traditional associated dry season golf game and social event provide further opportunity to foster external relations.

Discussions were held with the Mirarr at Manaburduma in November 2006 in relation to the closure of Ranger mine. The gathering was similar to that held at Mula in November 2005.

Figure 5.4 Closure consultations – Manaburduma November 2006

Representatives from SSD, NT DPIFM, NLC, EWLS and GAC met with the traditional owners of the Ranger project area and discussed various aspects of closure, including current ***eriss*** and EWLS research projects related to rehabilitation of the site. ***eriss*** provided information to the traditional owners on current SSD projects including landform design, radiological characteristics of the final landform, and ecosystem establishment. SSD's Communications and Monitoring Support Officer spoke in Kunwinjku (the local language group) about projects he was involved in and assisted with the translation of questions asked by the traditional owners.

SSD staff and representatives from the Northern Land Council and the NT Environment Centre and a traditional owner visited the Nabarlek site as part of the vegetation survey work that was being done in November 2006. Staff also attended the Nabarlek Annual General

Meeting and spoke to traditional owners about SSD research work currently being undertaken on the old mine site and on-site supervision and audit activities.

The details of proposed SSD research and monitoring activities within Kakadu National Park were circulated to relevant stakeholders in April 2007, as required by the working arrangements between Parks Australia North and SSD.

Indigenous stakeholders and the traditional owners of the Park are also kept informed on SSD activities through being involved in various committees. Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation and the Northern Land Council have membership on the Alligator Rivers Region Advisory Committee. NLC is a stakeholder member of the Alligator Rivers Region Technical Committee (ARRTC) and GAC is invited to attend as an observer. The Director of ***eriss*** is a member of the Kakadu Research Advisory Committee.

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

Other community engagement activities included:

- Gunbalanya Open Day in early July 2006 – Gunbalanya community council invited stakeholders to set up stalls or exhibits of interest to the local indigenous people and visitors to the region. SSD's stall included a GIS display, an interactive activity using macroinvertebrates to assess water health, and the Bushtucker GIS project.
- Mahbilil Festival at Jabiru in September 2006 – SSD hosted a stall with similar activities to Gunbalanya Open Day
- regular informal information sessions with traditional owners and other local indigenous people.
- 3-day CSIRO Top End Science Fair for schoolchildren, August 2006. SSD focused on macroinvertebrate collection, sorting and identification used to determine water health in creeks and waterways

All of these activities served to enhance understanding of our work and role and raise our profile within the local and wider community.

Figure 5.5 Visitors at the SSD stall at Gunbalanya Open Day

Figure 5.6 Healthy streams macroinvertebrate display at Mahbilil

5.3 National and international environmental protection activities

5.3.1 Environmental radiation protection

In April 2007, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna held the International Conference on 'Environmental radioactivity: from measurements and assessments to regulation', in cooperation with the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), South Pacific Environmental Radioactivity Association (SPERA), Belgian Nuclear Research Centre SCK-CEN and National Food Investigation Institute, Hungary (NFII). The objective of the conference was to foster information exchange between professionals working in the broad range of disciplines associated with environmental radioactivity from sampling design to regulation. The conference provided a forum to review current methodologies and to discuss future trends and developments and evaluate their practical implications for compliance.

To assist with the organisation of the conference, a Committee was established with representatives from the IAEA, the Instituto de Radioproteção e Dosimetria in Brazil, the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (NCRP) of the US, and the Research Centre for Radiation Protection National Institute of Radiological Sciences (NIRS) in Japan. Dr Andreas Bollhöfer from SSD was appointed to this committee as a representative from Australia. The committee first met in October 2005 in Seibersdorf, Austria and again in December 2006. The conference was held on 23–27 April 2007 at the Vienna International Centre – SSD staff Dr Andreas Bollhöfer and Michelle Iles presented papers at the conference (see Appendix 3).

5.3.2 Northern Australian Water Use Experts Summit – strategies and solutions

The Northern Australian Water Use Experts Summit was held in December 2006 at Parliament House Darwin. The objective of the Summit was to combine the expertise of senior government officials with that of indigenous people, water users and researchers in order to formulate strategies to address increasing pressure on water resources across the wet and dry tropics. An invited keynote presentation was delivered by Dr Renée Bartolo in a session titled 'The pervasive impact of climate change on the wet and dry tropics'. The presentation 'Climate change impacts in northern Australia: the threat of the rising sea' summarised the body of research ***eriss*** has produced relating to climate change vulnerability assessment of coastlines and wetlands in the Alligator Rivers Region and other areas in northern Australia in response to predicted sea level rise. ***eriss*** staff (including Drs Peter Bayliss & David Jones) also participated in the strategy and policy workshops as invited participants, chairs or rapporteurs. Dave Walden presented 'Protecting water bodies from invasive species' in a workshop titled 'Living, wild, healthy rivers: protecting fresh water ecosystems in Northern Australia'.

5.3.3 Kakadu National Park Landscape Change Symposium

In April 2007, Parks Australia North hosted the Kakadu National Park Landscape Change Symposium at the South Alligator River. This is the first in a series of symposiums and workshops focused on agents of change in Kakadu National Park (KNP) that will have relevance to similar environments outside the park. There were two specific aims of this initial symposium: (1) to provide an overview of the different agents of change, setting the scene for specific forums to follow later; and (2) to enable the effective two-way transfer of knowledge between KNP staff, researchers, the Kakadu Research Advisory Committee (KRAC) members, stakeholders, and traditional owners. ***eriss*** staff Dr Peter Bayliss and Dr Renée Bartolo actively participated in the organisation of the symposium through membership on the Steering Committee. The main objective of the symposium was to place research and scientific knowledge into a management context and pose questions to Park Managers and traditional owners regarding future management frameworks and research directions.

eriss staff also delivered presentations (or were contributors to presentations) at the symposium and were key participants in workshop sessions on climate change, weeds, feral animals and Ranger mine site rehabilitation (incorporation of the Ranger project area back into the Kakadu landscape). Dr Peter Bayliss presented 'Using a risk assessment approach to manage landscape change', Dr Renée Bartolo presented 'The status of climate change research in the Kakadu landscape context' and Dr David Jones presented 'Uranium mining in Kakadu – landscape issues for operations and closure'.

5.3.4 AusAID Public Sector Linkages Programme (PSLP) Project for Indonesian mine environment regulators

In 2006, SSD received funding from the AusAID Public Sector Linkages Programme (PSLP) to undertake a training programme for mining environmental officers from the Indonesian Ministry of Environment (MoE) and provincial environmental protection agencies. The training programme aims to equip course participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to:

- appropriately assess, monitor and regulate environmental aspects of mining activities in Indonesia;
- train others to undertake such assessment and regulation.

The Activity comprises a training course in Darwin and a 10-day follow-up visit by two Australian officials to Indonesia to provide subsequent assistance, advice and feedback. It is a collaboration between SSD, Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Northern Territory Government (DPIFM, NRETA/EPA).

The official opening of the Indonesian Mining Environmental Training Course took place at CDU on Monday 20 November 2006. The training programme was officially launched by the Hon David Tollner MP, Federal Member for Solomon.

Fifteen MoE/provincial mining environmental officials undertook four weeks (20 November – 15 December) of training in and around Darwin. The training course consisted of two parts: a two week technical training programme in 'Mining environmental regulation and

monitoring', followed by a two week training programme in 'Workplace assessment and training' (ie train-the-trainer). In addition to lectures and workshops, the technical training programme included field visits to four mine sites in the Top End of the Northern Territory. Figure 5.7 shows the course participants and SSD presenters at the abandoned Mt Todd Gold Mine, approximately 250 km south-east of Darwin.

Figure 5.7 PSLP mining environmental monitoring and regulation course participants and SSD presenters at Mt Todd Gold Mine, NT

In August 2007, two Australian project team members will visit Indonesia to provide follow-up assistance with the development of an in-country training programme by MoE and any additional on-ground advice in relation to mining environmental regulation and monitoring.

5.3.5 Tropical Rivers Inventory and Assessment Project

Communication and extension activities for the Tropical Rivers Inventory and Assessment Project (TRIAP) have largely been supported by a dedicated officer in ***eriss***. More information about TRIAP is contained in chapter 3, section 3.14.

5.3.6 Basslink

Information about Basslink was presented in last year's Supervising Scientist annual report. The last review undertaken by the Gordon River Scientific Reference Committee was of the 2005–06 Annual Report, which represented consolidated results for 2005–06, the fifth and final year of pre-Basslink monitoring.

5.4 Science communication and education

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 a range of in-house journals and reports. These include: the Supervising Scientist and Internal Report series for detailed reporting on scientific projects; and the Supervising Scientist Note series, which is used to showcase specific projects to a wider

audience. More than half of the Supervising Scientist Report series is available in PDF format on the SSD web site – the aim is to have the remainder online during 2007–08. In addition, staff of the Division have contributed articles to a range of external journals and presented papers and posters at various conferences and workshops. Papers given at international and national conferences are included in Appendix 3. A full list of papers and reports published during 2006–07 is at Appendix 2.

Other media, such as posters and educational or promotional materials, are also produced on a needs basis to suit specific requirements or events.

The research and supervision sections of the SSD web site have been reviewed and updated during 2006–07. A new 'closure and rehabilitation' web section is under development. A new site structure will be implemented in 2007–08. (See www.environment.gov.au/ssd for SSD publications as well as current results for the chemical, biological and radiological monitoring programmes.)

Staff have been involved in the organisation and presentation of conferences, seminars and lectures, at our facility and in partnership with other government agencies (eg Parks Australia North), research organisations such as Charles Darwin University, and professional bodies including the Royal Australian Chemical Institute, the Australian Water Association, the Spatial Sciences Institute and the Institute of Engineers Australia. Involvement in these activities further illustrates the Division's commitment to the advancement of professional practice and communication of the work of SSD and is an important part of our contribution to the local scientific and professional communities.

Once again, in 2006–07 ***eriss*** has taken on the supervision of a number of students doing post-graduate research projects, including students from Charles Darwin University and other universities around Australia. In addition, a number of the Division's staff hold positions within external scientific, technical and other professional organisations, including on various editorial boards and panels. ***eriss*** also hosts researchers from other organisations to undertake collaborative funded projects, or for sabbatical periods.

SSD participated in the IAEA Fellowship Programme with ***oss*** hosting the visit of an officer from the Brazilian government looking at waste management issues associated with uranium mining.

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 Ranger mine, and sessions with the NT Chief Minister and the Northern Land Council.

Dr David Jones is the representative of the Department of the Environment and Water Resources on the steering committee for the Leading Practice Sustainable Development Programme for the Mining Industry funded and chaired by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources and including representatives from DEW, the Australian mining industry, research bodies and chairs of expert working groups. The programme was established in 2005 to support the sustainable development of the Australian minerals industry. Dr Jones is also a contributing author for the handbook on acidic and metalliferous drainage – one of the 14 booklets to be produced as part of this programme.

And finally an example of science communication and education with a younger audience. Ten members of CSIRO's Double Helix Club visited SSD's Ecotoxicology laboratory as part of the club's career events for 2007. Aged between 10–13 years old, the Double Helix members observed plants and animals cultured in the ecotoxicology laboratory as part of routine toxicity testing.

Figure 5.8 The CSIRO Double Helix Club visits the SSD Ecotoxicology laboratory

5.5 International conferences

Staff of the Supervising Scientist participated in a range of international conferences, seminars and workshops during 2006–07 (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. Staff also attended conferences, seminars and workshops in Australia. A list of papers presented during 2006–07 is at Appendix 3.

TABLE 5.1 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS, 2006–07

Event	Location	Date
7th meeting of Kyoto and Carbon Initiative Science Panel	Tsukuba Space Centre, nr Tokyo, Japan	15–22 January 2007
International Conference on Environmental Radioactivity: From measurements and assessments to regulation	IAEA, Vienna, Austria	23–27 April 2007
2nd IAEA organising committee meeting for 2007 International Conference on Environmental Radioactivity	IAEA, Vienna, Austria	6–8 December 2006