

4 STATUTORY COMMITTEES

4.1 Introduction

During 2008–09, 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 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*. ARRAC facilitates 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 Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources
- NT Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport
- NT Department of Department of Health and Families
- Office of the Administrator of the NT
- Australian Government Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism
- Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency
- Energy Resources of Australia Ltd
- Cameco Australia
- Uranium Equities Ltd
- Koongarra Pty Ltd (a subsidiary of AREVA NC)
- Northern Land Council
- Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation
- Environment Centre Northern Territory
- West Arnhem Shire Council
- Parks Australia, Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
- Supervising Scientist Division, Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

ARRAC offers a valuable forum for stakeholders to exchange views and information relating to the protection and rehabilitation of the Alligator Rivers Region environment 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.

At each ARRAC meeting, Stakeholders present information reports to ensure transparency and enhance knowledge sharing. Information reports usually include a summary and interpretation of monitoring data and details of periodic environmental reports from mining companies. SSD provides a comprehensive report to each ARRAC meeting covering the outcomes of audit and assessment activities and environmental monitoring.

ARRAC met twice during 2008–09: in Jabiru in August 2008 and in Darwin in March 2009. Key issues considered by ARRAC at these meetings included:

- the status of mine operations, planning and development at Ranger;
- the results of chemical, biological and radiological monitoring for Ranger and Jabiluka;
- SSD communication and research activities;
- the outcomes of environmental audits and assessments of Ranger, Jabiluka and Nabarlek;
- the outcomes of Minesite Technical Committee (MTC) meetings and other regulatory processes;
- the status of mine rehabilitation projects in the South Alligator Valley;
- progress in the Uranium Industry Framework; and
- the Northern Land Council's work with the Alligator Rivers Region stakeholders and traditional owners.

ARRAC meeting minutes are available from the ARRAC web site at www.environment.gov.au/ssd/communication/committees/arrac/meeting.html.

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 appropriate and of the highest possible standard. ARRTC also reviews the quality of the science underpinning regulatory assessment and approval of proposals by uranium mining companies in the Alligator Rivers Region.

ARRTC reports openly, independently and without restriction.

Members of ARRTC are appointed by the Australian Government Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts and include:

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

Professor Colin Woodroffe from the University of Wollongong was appointed to ARRTC as the independent scientific member with expertise in Geomorphology in 2008.

ARRTC met twice in Darwin during 2008–09: in October 2008 and March 2009.



Figure 4.1 ERA staff explaining to ARRTC and SSD visitors wet season management of runoff from waste rock stockpiles during a field trip to Ranger mine

The key issues considered by ARRTC during these meetings included:

- current and proposed scientific research activities for *eriss* and ERA, in the context of the ARRTC Key Knowledge Needs;
- outcomes of chemical, biological and radiological research and monitoring being undertaken by DRDPIFR, ERA and SSD;
- scientific and technical issues relating to Ranger, Jabiluka and Nabarlek;
- the science underpinning Minesite Technical Committee (MTC) meetings and other regulatory decision making;
- the status of South Alligator Valley rehabilitation activities; and
- activity reports from the various stakeholder organisations.

During 2008-09, ARRTC undertook a gap analysis of its 2008-10 Key Knowledge Needs to ensure they continue to provide a sound basis for prioritising and planning the environmental and mining-related scientific research activities undertaken by the relevant stakeholder organisations going forward. The gap analysis is expected to be finalised in late 2009 and ARRTC will provide advice to the Minister on the outcomes. The ARRTC 2008–10 Key Knowledge Needs are included in Appendix 1 of this Annual Report.

ARRTC meeting minutes are available on the ARRTC web site at www.environment.gov.au/ssd/communication/committees/arrtc/index.html.