



**Media release:**

20 November 2020

## **Minister Manison's approval of McArthur River Mine expansion breaches NT mining laws – ECNT calls for a public inquiry into its management**

Minister Manison's decision to approve McArthur River Mine's Mining Management Plan (MMP) is the latest in a string of environmentally disastrous decisions by the Northern Territory Government in its flailing attempts to manage the unfolding impacts of the remote Gulf mine.

It leaves the McArthur River, and the livelihoods of current and future generations of Gulf residents, at risk. It also leaves Territorians with an unfunded liability of hundreds of millions – possibly billions – of dollars if the mine packs up and leaves. Not only that, but the approval breaches the Northern Territory's own mining laws.

Environment Centre NT (ECNT) Co-Director Kirsty Howey said today: "Minister Manison's decision demonstrates nothing short of regulatory failure by the Northern Territory Government. This is a disastrous turn of events for Aboriginal residents of Borroloola who live downstream of the mine, the lands and waters of the Gulf region, and for the Territory as a whole."

"The regulation of this mine by the Northern Territory Government is a national embarrassment. The mine revealed during its environmental impact assessment that rehabilitation and monitoring of the mine would need to continue for a minimum of 1000 years to keep the McArthur River and groundwater systems free from pollutants caused by acid mine drainage. Yet the Mining Management Plan approved by Minister Manison contains no closure plan, and no costings for its closure, rehabilitation and monitoring. This clearly breaches the provisions of the *Mining Management Act* which require these matters to be included in any plan before being approved. As far as ECNT is concerned there is no current valid mining plan to authorise McArthur River Mine's mining operations."

The Environment Centre NT notes with concern that the security bond for the mine has been revised downwards from approximately half a billion dollars to around \$400 million.

Ms Howey said: "It is widely known the security bond for this mine is completely inadequate. The circumstances in which this security bond has been decreased requires immediate investigation. It is bewildering that, despite the disclosure by the mine that 1000 years of monitoring would be required to appropriately manage post-mining impacts, the bond has not been at least doubled. Instead, it has extraordinarily been revised downwards."

“This approval has ramifications beyond the Gulf Region. The failure of the Northern Territory Government to increase the security bond given what we know about this mine’s potentially disastrous impacts post-closure will leave the Northern Territory, and ultimately Territorians, to foot the bill for the clean-up if the mine walks away. The Northern Territory Government’s decision leaves Territorians with an unfunded liability of hundreds of millions – possibly billions of dollars. This is unacceptable.”

The Environment Centre NT notes that Northern Territory Labor Governments have a track record of intervening in favour of this mine, whatever it takes and whatever the cost to Territory lands, waters, and livelihoods. The Mining Management Plan is invalid at law, the security bond is manifestly inadequate, and the Gunner Government should immediately establish a public inquiry to investigate its disastrous mismanagement.

### **Media contact**

Kirsty Howey: 0488 928 811