



Media release:

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The Independent Monitor for McArthur River Mine is failing as a mechanism to ensure oversight of Australia's most toxic mine

ECNT is bewildered by the latest Independent Monitor report for McArthur River Mine, which is completely out of step with every Independent Monitor report published since the mine was converted to open cut in 2008.

ECNT's Co-Director, Kirsty Howey, said "the latest Independent Monitor report for McArthur River Mine is nothing short of bewildering. It does not address a significant number of environmental risks identified by the previous Independent Monitor. There's no way these problems have vanished into thin air. The public, and Borroloola community, deserve an explanation."

"For example, the previous Independent Monitor identified a new "catastrophic" risk posed by the mine, that the McArthur River may reconnect with the old channel, causing failure of the mine wall and the discharge of contaminated water into the river (Erias Group, ES-2). If the mine levee wall fails, this would poison the river in perpetuity. The previous Independent Monitor said (in 2018) that if this occurs "it is likely that movement of the channel will occur reasonably rapidly with the channel likely to migrate into the old McArthur River channel", and that impact on the mine levee wall is likely "potentially in the medium term". However, there is no clear indication in the latest Independent Monitor report of what the mine is doing to prevent this risk."

"The previous Independent Monitor also said that the inadequacy of the security bond was a "high risk", stating that the "current closure costs are insufficient in the event of MRM being unable to complete rehabilitation of the site" (2018). However, the inadequacy of the security bond is not mentioned at all in the new report."

"The previous Independent Monitor report identified no less than 117 ongoing recommendations "that have either been partially addressed or not advanced at all (ERIAS, 2018, pp5-6). However, the latest report makes no mention of these outstanding issues, and doesn't even refer to the previous report. We have no way of telling whether these concerns have been addressed."

"The Independent Monitor was the community's guarantee that this mine would be subject to the highest scrutiny. It seems that it has been reduced to a tick and flick exercise, where the Monitor just reports about whether the mine has complied with conditions imposed by the regulator, rather than undertaking genuine environmental oversight as required by the conditions imposed by the government for the Independent Monitor."

"Serious questions need to be asked of the Department about whether and how they have changed terms of reference for the new Independent Monitor. It just doesn't make sense for risks of this scale to have vanished into thin air."

"Not only does the latest report ignore key environmental risks, it is also nearly 3 years late. This is an unacceptable delay and raises questions about the utility of the Independent Monitor as an oversight mechanism. There is no doubt that the Independent Monitor completely failing as a mechanism to ensure oversight of this toxic mine."

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