

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 53
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Topic: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ASSESSMENT - RANGER 3 DEEPS
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Question Date: 27 May 2014
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: We got correspondence from the minister's office that indicates that the environmental impact assessment process for the Ranger 3 Deeps won't be progressing until the task force investigations are complete, which seems reasonable to me. Is that your understanding?

Senator Birmingham: That might be a matter for Dr Dripps.

Dr Dripps: As you may recall, the Supervising Scientist does not lead the assessment of environmental impacts for Ranger 3 Deeps. That is run by the environmental assessment and compliance division, who will be here in 1.5 later in the day. So the EIA process is necessarily quite a detailed one for a mine of this kind. The expectation is that we will not be receiving the next step in that process for some time.

Senator LUDLAM: Can I put more of that to you or would you rather I wait until those folks show up?

Dr Dripps: I can give it a go.

Senator LUDLAM: It is a fairly simple yes or no. Will that process of assessment remain suspended until the investigations that Mr McAllister and his colleagues are up to are completed?

Dr Dripps: I would have to have the minister's correspondence in front of me, but if it is as you have described it, and it says that the assessment won't progress, then that will be what occurs.

Senator LUDLAM: I suspect that I don't. Can you pop that on notice and I can come back in 1.5?

Dr Dripps: We will come back with the answer in 1.5.

Answer:

On 5 June 2014 the Australian Government Minister for Industry, the Hon Ian Macfarlane MP and the Northern Territory Government Minister for Mines and Energy, the Hon Willem Westra van Holthe issued a joint media release advising that they had provided Energy Resources of Australia Ltd with approval to restart the Ranger processing plant. This follows completion of investigations of the leach tank circuit and other critical infrastructure by independent experts Noetic Risk Solution and HRL Technology, who have delivered a Restart Capability Report to the Northern Territory and Australian Governments.

The Department of the Environment will consider the results of the investigations prior to making a final decision on this project.