

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment and Energy portfolio**

**Question No:** 114  
**Hearing:** Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1  
**Program:** Science  
**Topic:** Ranger uranium mine: water volumes  
**Hansard Page:** 97-98  
**Question Date:** 23 May 2017  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Ludlam asked:**

Senator LUDLAM: We are face-to-face with you three times a year. How far away is it until, when I put an identical question to you in a forthcoming session, you would be able to say, 'This is how much water is under there. This is how much we are going to require them to remove'? I understand the thought process and the idea of working backwards from your ideal environmental state, but it still sounds immeasurably vague. There is nothing quantitative to back it up, and I do not even know what you mean by 'environmental requirements' or who gets to decide those. How far are we from actually having some formal conditions and some water volumes or some contamination concentrations or something that we could get a grip on?

Mr Tayler: There are already statutory water quality limits in the creek surrounding the mine from an operational perspective. The environmental requirements I referred to are the environmental requirements of the Commonwealth of Australia for the operation of the Ranger uranium mine, which are essentially approval conditions for the mine. That is where the rehabilitation objectives are prescribed. It is a statutory requirement that the company meet those rehabilitation objectives, and they include things like protecting the World Heritage values of Kakadu National Park. To give you the specific answer that you are asking, I would have to check with the ERA again on their work program.

Senator LUDLAM: If you could.

Mr Tayler: I am happy to do that on notice. I know that their current priority is to commence the groundwater modelling of the TSF area. I just could not tell you exactly when that was due to be completed, but I can find out.

**Answer:**

Energy Resources of Australia Limited (ERA) has indicated that a detailed proposal for the Tailing Storage Facility (TSF) decommissioning will be submitted for regulatory approval in December 2019. This proposal will need to include details about the nature and extent of the existing groundwater plume beneath the TSF, as well as proposed remediation activities. ERA have already commenced groundwater modelling to inform this proposal.