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PRIME MINISTER

Press Statement No.583
28 October 1975

THE RANGER URANIUM PROJECT IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam; the Managing Director of Electrolytic Zinc Company of Australasia Ltd., Mr Mackay; and the Chairman of Peko Mines Ltd., Mr Proud signed this afternoon a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and the Companies for the development and mining of uranium ore deposits in the Ranger area in the Northern Territory and for the production and sale of uranium concentrate from that ore.

This Memorandum represents an elaboration of the Agreement previously signed by the Ministers and representatives of the Companies on 30 October 1974.

The completion of this Memorandum of Understanding will now facilitate the early preparation of formal agreements in relation to this Venture. It is understood by the Parties, however, that these agreements will not become effective until Australia has affirmed them following consideration of:

- (a) the Report of the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry (Hearings by this Inquiry commenced on 9 September 1975 with Mr Justice Fox as presiding Commissioner.);
- (b) the outcome of any claims by Aboriginals in respect of land within the Ranger area (in conformity with the procedures to be required by the Aboriginal Land (Northern Territory) Bill 1975 now before the Parliament).

The discussions which have led to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding this afternoon confirms the confidence of the Government and Peko and EZ in this major Australian mining enterprise. The Government believes that the Ranger Project can be a major export earner and it will be working with Peko and EZ to bring this fully Australian mining project to fruition. Nevertheless, it is essential before the project can proceed, that the Government receive the Report of the Environmental Inquiry and take whatever steps it may then judge necessary in the light of the findings and recommendations of that Inquiry.

CANBERRA. A.C.T.