



## PRIME MINISTER

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### ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS IN THE ALLIGATOR RIVERS REGION

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The Government wishes to assure the Aboriginal people in the Alligator Rivers Region that until their claims over land in Stage II of the Region have been determined it will not permit granting of mining interests over that land without their prior consultation and agreement.

This assurance is, however, on the understanding that Aboriginal claims in Stage II will be lodged as soon as practicable and preferably not later than the end of this year. To this end the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will have early discussions with the Northern Land Council on the timing and extent of the claims.

After the Aboriginal land claims have been determined the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act would, of course, apply including its consent provisions.

The Deputy Prime Minister has already announced that the Government will direct the Administrator of the Northern Territory to defer the granting of any mineral lease or exploration licence in Stage II of the Region until the control procedures have been finalised and Aboriginal claims over land to be claimed have been determined.

The control procedures for Stage II will be finalised as soon as possible and before there is any minerals exploration in the area. The Government is also expediting the purchase of the Mudginberri and Munmarlary pastoral leases in Stage II in order to create an opportunity for Aboriginal land claims to be made and determined.

Negotiations are at present taking place between the Northern Land Council and the Ranger Joint Venturers. An early conclusion of these negotiations is important. The Government will do everything in its power to ensure that the Ranger Project is developed as quickly as possible subject to meeting the necessary constraints, social and environmental, and protecting Aboriginal interests in accordance with the Government's statements to Parliament on 25 August last year.

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