

CLC takes broad brush approach to uranium education

The Central Land Council has been working hard to educate Aboriginal people in its region about uranium as more exploration applications are sought by companies looking for uranium on Aboriginal land.

While many traditional land owners in Central Australia are familiar with other forms of mining, uranium exploration and mining is something new to the region since the Australian Government announced the Northern Territory was open for uranium business and uranium prices increased markedly in 2007.

The language used is unfamiliar and so too are some of the environmental and political issues related to it.

CLC director David Ross said, "Our staff have gone to great efforts to inform traditional land owners about those issues by providing a whole range of information in a variety of forms from all sides of the debate.

"Now mining companies and other land councils have recognised the balanced approach of the CLC to disseminating information to its constituents and invited its staff to share its methods by making presentations interstate."

In 2005 CLC staff organised a visit for traditional land owners



Above: CLC delegates learn how to use a Geiger Counter at the recent CLC meeting in Tennant Creek;

to the Olympic Dam uranium mine in South Australia to meet with the mining company, traditional land owners in that region and South Australian environmental groups. A DVD was made of the visit so the knowledge gained from the exercise could be passed on to other traditional owners.

A visit to the Ranger uranium mine in Kakadu National Park in the NT's Top End was conducted last year with similar meetings organised with the mine operators, traditional

land owners from the area and the Office of the Supervising Scientist, which monitors the mine.

A DVD was also made of that trip and is being presented to traditional land owners across the CLC region.

A third DVD was filmed during a "uranium information roadshow" in the northern Tanami region last year. The DVD features speakers in favour of and against uranium mining and a government representative explaining the approval and regulatory processes. Such presen-

tations, including visual material detailing all the issues surrounding uranium, are being provided at meetings across the CLC region.

"The CLC's main concern is to ensure that traditional land owners are fully informed of the issues if they have to make a decision about exploration and, as a consequence, mining," Mr Ross said. "These efforts have been prioritised in areas where exploration applications are focused but are also occurring in all parts of the CLC region."



Above: CLC delegates listen to the presentation on uranium at the Council meeting in Tennant Creek. The roadshow banners are on display

And Angela Pamela...

In the case of the Angela Pamela exploration project south of Alice Springs, the deposit is on a pastoral lease where the Native Title Act applies and not Aboriginal land, so traditional land owners cannot stop the project proceeding.

Now that the government has granted the exploration licence, traditional land owners are concerned that the exploration work be done in as safe a

manner as possible.

The CLC is talking with the company in an effort to ensure sacred sites are protected.

The CLC is also holding discussions with the company about maximising employment opportunities for traditional land owners who might want to take them up.

"Traditional owners' major concerns with the Angela Pamela exploration proposal are that the

country be protected, ensuring that water in the region remains safe and uncontaminated and that dust issues are properly dealt with," Mr Ross said.

"It's important to note that, as is the case in the wider community, there are a broad range of views on uranium exploration and mining amongst traditional land owners across Central Australia and many people are still forming their opinions."