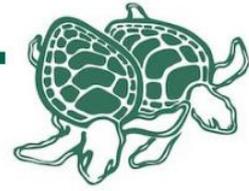


# Environment Centre NT



**Media release: Environmental groups welcome landmark prosecution of Territory iron ore mine**

**Details: NRR Pty Ltd will appear in the Local Court at 9:30AM Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March.**

The Environment Centre NT welcomes the announcement of the prosecution of Nathan River Resources Pty Ltd over its alleged unauthorised discharge of wastewater in February 2021. However, ECNT believes that the discharge of heavy metals into the pristine Towns River is evidence of continued failures in mining regulation in the Northern Territory.

**Kirsty Howey, Co-Director of the Environment Centre NT, said,**

“The Environment Centre NT has been raising concerns about this mine for years.

“Heavy metals have been accumulating in the open pit for years, since it was mothballed in 2014. Yet the mine was reapproved in 2020 without a new environmental impact assessment, or any public disclosure of mining documentation. Notwithstanding our requests, DITT have refused to make publicly available the Mining Management Plan, despite making MMPs public being a commitment of the Gunner Government.”

“It never should have come to this. That the release of heavy metals into the Towns River has occurred is a travesty, but was inevitable given the slapdash way in which this mine has been regulated.

“The mine never should have been re-approved by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade in without a new environmental impact assessment. McArthur River Mine, Mount Todd, and Redbank have all suffered similar fates, in very similar circumstances. When are we going to learn? The state of mining regulation in the Territory is a disgrace.”

The prosecution comes as the Gunner Government have committed to reforming the Northern Territory’s *Mining Management Act*. Groups such as the Environment Centre NT have been calling on greater transparency and accountability for the mining sector.

For further comment contact Kirsty Howey 0488 928 811

## **Background**

The NRR mine is located in an area of enormous environmental significance, in the middle of an iconic national park (Limmen National Park), with a receiving environment that includes the pristine Towns River, and one of the Territory’s only marine parks (Limmen Marine Park).

The mine was approved in 2012 by the Northern Territory Government despite significant shortcomings in the environmental impact assessment, which were acknowledged by the NTEPA. The CEO of Western Desert Resources was prosecuted under federal environmental law for going ahead with constructing mine infrastructure without environmental approvals in place.

The mine was put into “care and maintenance” after Western Desert Resources went into receivership in 2014. It was reapproved in 2020 after the tenements were purchased by NRR Pty Ltd.

The unauthorised wastewater discharges occurred in February 2021, but were only publicly disclosed in a Waste Discharge License Monitoring Report [published on the NTEPA website](#) late last year. About the unauthorised discharge occurring on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the report states that “due to an operational oversight, it was not reported to the NT EPA at that time”. The same report identifies that, according to sampling taken from the Towns River, trigger values were exceeded for the heavy metals arsenic, cyanide, lead, nickel, and zinc.

### **Timeline of NRR Pty Ltd**

2012: Company known as Western Desert Resources undergoes an Environmental Impact Assessment for an Iron Ore Mine at Roper Bar, near the community of Ngukurr, and is approved by the NTEPA later that year.

2014: Western Desert Resources goes into voluntary administration, and the mine is closed.

2018: New company Nathan River Resources approved to reopen the mine and ship existing stockpiled minerals and process low-grade ore.

2020: Mine fully re-opens under Nathan River Resources. DITT re-approves commencement of mining activities under the Mining Management Act, however no new environment approval process is undertaken.

2020: NRR applies for a new Waste Discharge License.

2021, November: Mine re-enters care and maintenance.

2022, March: NRR is prosecuted over unauthorised discharges.