

Chief Minister must rule out destructive open cut seabed mining in the Territory

A coalition of groups, including the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS), Environment Centre NT and Protect Arnhem Land have called on Chief Minister Adam Giles to permanently ban seabed mining in the Northern Territory. The existing moratorium on seabed mining in NT waters introduced by the previous Territory government is set to expire this week, on 6 March.

“Open cut seabed mining is like taking a giant grinder to the sea floor, destroying the habitats of our precious marine life and smothering fish feeding and nursery grounds,” Jacqueline Taylor, AMCS Northern Marine Campaigner said.

“The moratorium on seabed mining was first put in place to protect precious places such as Roper River mouth, the seagrass beds and islands of the Gulf near Borroloola, and Elcho Island from open cut seabed mining. We now need a permanent ban.

“When Chief Minister Giles supported a ban on open cut seabed mining he was right in saying that the mining was unproven science and could damage the environment.¹

“We have major problems with pollution and failed remediation of mines on land in the Northern Territory. We can’t pretend that open cut mines on the seafloor can be safely managed without massive damage to the marine environment.”

Protect Arnhem Land representative, Helena Gulwa said “many Traditional Owners and residents of West Arnhem Land are concerned about damage that seabed mining would have on our sea country and the coastal environment. These areas are rich in cultural and historical sites, tribal burial grounds, dreaming and song lines.

“Areas like seagrasses and mangroves, support turtles and dugongs and are vital to the culture and livelihoods of our communities.

“We’re concerned about the future of our children and the future for Australians. The government must permanently ban seabed mining. Mining companies keep coming back wanting access to sea country and we need protection,” said Helena Gulwa.

Environment Centre NT Acting Director Anna Boustead said “destroying the seafloor habitat that our marine life and communities depend on is short term thinking at its worst. The Northern Territory has some of the healthiest tropical seas in the world but they won’t stay that way unless we manage them carefully by protecting them from destructive activities such as seabed mining.”

David Morris of the NT Environment Defenders Office said “the Government can easily make the ban permanent. That would be consistent with the bipartisan position up until now that seabed mining is too destructive for our seas.”

For more information contact:

Jacqueline Taylor, Australian Marine Conservation Society (NT) 0477 041 877

Helena Gulwa, Protect Arnhem Land, 0459 702 916

Anna Boustead, Environment Centre NT, 0406 145 953



¹ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-06-12/groote-eylandt-seabed-mining-total-ban-nt-govt/4749576>