

**URANIUM MINING — MULGA ROCK —
STATEMENT BY UPURLI UPURLI AND SPINIFEX WOMEN**

Statement

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [5.30 pm]: I rise today to share a statement from the Upurli Upurli and Spinifex women regarding the unprecedented threat they face from uranium mining at Mulga Rock. Before I read the statement, I want to make a few short comments.

In its most recent quarterly report, Deep Yellow, formerly Vimy Resources, pushed out the time line of the project by years. A new definitive feasibility study is now not expected until mid-2024. That is after having already completed two definitive feasibility studies, in 2018 and 2021. In short, the project is clearly not feasible and probably not happening. But it is hard to understand how this company has been able to convince this government that it has substantially commenced a mine when the feasibility of said mine will not even be determined for another two years. This is a mine that the company has not yet decided to build and has no funding for.

Nearly a year ago, this government signed off on the company's claims that it had "substantially commenced" mining at Mulga Rock by clearing some land and laying a few kilometres of pipe. A year later, there are still huge tracts of cleared land sitting undeveloped and eroding. The implication of this government's decision to accept that the Mulga Rock project has substantially commenced is that a community that has been fighting against uranium mining for decades is left living with the constant threat of a uranium mine.

The Upurli Upurli and Spinifex people and others in the local community have been forced to engage with the company, which has shown little regard for their concerns and their connection to country. Additionally, the government's decision to declare the Mulga Rock project as having substantially commenced has removed any time constraints and given the company a free pass to pursue an environmentally reckless project. If it were to go ahead, the project would put the endangered sandhill dunnart under threat and leave Western Australians with a legacy of 32 million tonnes of radioactive tailings.

I now read the statement —

Two years ago Juukan Gorge became a name known around Australia. Blasting by Rio Tinto made the Puutu Kuntj Kurrama and Pinikura lands shake and destroyed ancient cultural heritage sites. The reverberations were felt across the country with a collective sense of outrage and despair over our failed and deficient systems, corporations and institutions.

Rio Tinto declared that this destruction was at odds with the company's values and there was a subsequent exit of senior people—including then CEO Jean Sébastien Jacques. This list included Chris Salisbury, the Chief Executive of Rio Tinto's Iron Ore operations at the time. Following the blasting, it was reported that, he had told staff that he regretted that people had been upset by the destruction, but he failed to apologise for the loss of ancient cultural heritage.

Sadly, the collective sense of loss and failure felt over the destruction at Juukan Gorge has not led to better heritage protection laws and it has not stopped the people involved from working in the mining industry. Our deep concern is that the true lessons of Juukan have not been learnt and are set to happen again.

We are Upurli Upurli and Spinifex women and we are writing because we face the unprecedented threat of uranium mining at Mulga Rock, east of Kalgoorlie. This push to open WA's first uranium mine is being driven by a mining company called Deep Yellow that is led by Chris Salisbury and former Paladin Energy CEO John Borshoff.

We have been saying no to uranium mining at Mulga Rock for a long time. Despite Vimy saying, they will have dust control in place and it will be at a minimum, we are concerned as the dust will fall onto the, plants—the food source for animals such as the kangaroo, who digest that food, which in turn impacts First Nation People who eat Kangaroo. This raises serious health concerns for our people.

The desecration of our sandhill Country impacts the Sandhill Dunnart, which is formally listed as endangered—its home and habitat are already under pressure from the planned mine, and this would only get worse.

There are no government processes that give our group any say in what happens in our Country. This Country is part of our past, present and future.

Our families on the Spinifex side were refugees who fled or were forced from Maralinga during the British atomic weapons tests. Our people made their home at Cundelee, just fifty kilometres from the proposed mine. They practiced Law and Culture and looked after that Country, and we continue to do that today.

We don't want uranium mining on our country because we are out on that Country camping and moving around doing our social, cultural and religious practices.

It's not just the Board level connection to the Juukan Gorge destruction that has us worried. John Borshoff the CEO of Deep Yellow and former CEO of Paladin, he was involved with Paladin up until 2015.

There have been so many media reports about Paladin that make us really worried.

There was news about a spill from the mine and then later there were reports of fish kills in the nearby Lake. Environment groups have been worried about the water Paladin was allowed to release from the site the community and environment groups are worried that has been contaminating the water.

Between 2009 and 2013 there were reports about workers dying, getting sick, going on strike over pay and work conditions. There were local reports from Namibia, Malawi and Australian media outlets.

After Fukushima the drop in uranium price meant companies like Paladin weren't profitable. They put mines in to Care and Maintenance and sold off assets. Mr Borshoff stepped down from Paladin when the company had \$480 million worth of debt and shortly after went into administration.

The ability to walk away from a troubled company and start with a new company and new deposits is shocking to us.

Our culture is built on respect for the past and responsibility for the future. We do not have confidence in others who seek to operate on our country but who do not share or show these values.

For the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura who have had their story stolen and destroyed there is no justice. For the families in Malawi who have suffered loss from Paladin's Kayelekera mine there is no justice. Now these miners are knocking on our door and we want to keep it closed against the continuing pain and shame of Juukan Gorge our voices need to be heard.

We say no to uranium mining at Mulga Rock."

That is a very clear statement against mining at Mulga Rock.

I want to thank Maria Barton, Debbie Carmody, Libby Carmody, Ada Jameson, Janice Scott, Noreen Scott and Veronica Scott for sharing this statement with me, and allowing me to read it in this place today.

To conclude, I call on this government to review the substantial commencement status of the Mulga Rock project.

I seek to table that document.

[Leave granted. See paper 1851.]