

## What Future for the Anti-Uranium Movement ?

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The Howard government is claiming a mandate to open more uranium mines. Yet an overwhelming majority of people oppose the mine at Jabiluka on the Mirrar people's land in World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park.

During the recent federal election campaign, the anti-uranium movement missed an important opportunity to make Jabiluka a central election issue. This was because the leaders of the Jabiluka movement decided on an essentially pro-Labor marginal seats campaign which tied the fortunes of the anti-Jabiluka campaign to those of the Labor Party. This was despite the fact that Labor refused to promise unequivocally to stop the mine from going ahead.

While Labor likes to make out it is still the anti-uranium party, its record says otherwise. Despite mass opposition, Labor became a pro-uranium party when it adopted its three-mine policy in the early 1980s prompting thousands of people to leave the party.

Labor had wanted to junk its opposition to uranium mining for some time, but was prevented from doing so largely because of pressure from campaigns such as the Movement Against Uranium Mining. MAUM was able to make uranium a key public issue in the late 1970s and early 1980s largely because it was a broad activist-based organisation which successfully maintained its independence from the Labor party and was therefore not compromised.

This political independence was partly compromised in the nuclear disarmament movement of the 1980s. In the 1990s the environment peak bodies deepened this compromise with their lobbyist orientation to the then Labor federal government.

If the anti-uranium movement is going to be able stop the Coalition government from pushing ahead with its anti-environment, anti-people agenda, the leadership of the movement has to aim to mobilise the broad, but passive, anti-uranium sentiment that exists in this country. To do this, it must be able to maintain its integrity as an independently organised and politically non-aligned force.