

Submission

Senate Economics References Inquiry - National Radioactive Waste Management Facility

Introduction:

My name is Barbara Walker. My husband and I bought a home in Quorn fifteen years ago, retiring to the peace and tranquility of the magnificent Flinders Ranges.

We are both active volunteers within our community. I served as a volunteer lifeguard/supervisor at the Quorn swimming pool for nine years and am also a volunteer at the Platform Gallery in Port Augusta. I am a member of the Flinders Local Action Group - a group of concerned citizens protecting the Flinders Ranges and against a pending nuclear waste repository.

My husband is a regular volunteer for several local clubs and community fundraising events. He is also an organiser for an annual military veterans retreat and a volunteer radio operator for the VKS-737/RFDS Radio Network.

Through our network of friends and radio contacts we have always encouraged people to visit the iconic Flinders Ranges. Many travellers visit us while travelling through Quorn and most are horrified after discovering a nuclear waste repository is pending for the Flinders Ranges.

A nuclear waste facility will adversely affect tourism within the Flinders and outer regions. Many travellers from Australia and abroad have said they will not return if a waste dump is located in the Flinders Ranges.

The prospect of a nuclear waste repository has also caused much division and ill health within our local communities.

The Flinders Ranges is the home of the Adnyamathanha people who coincide with tourism operators and local pastoralists in showcasing the marvels of the Flinders Ranges.

The question of broad community support:

I believe the Orima survey was flawed and inconsistent with broad community views and opinions.

Orima survey phone calls were made but only to some fixed home phones. These days most people use mobile phones. Mobile phone users were not surveyed.

Orima offered small incentives in the form of supermarket vouchers to some indigenous respondents. Proof of this is written in the Orima survey, headed "Interview Method". Why was this necessary? Would this be classed as a bribe?

In my opinion a better way to survey people would be through the postal system, canvassing the whole community by using a simple democratic process. Perhaps using the AEC would have been a better and fairer solution, and in doing so, every community member would have a voice.

South Australia's Nuclear Waste Storage Facility (Prohibition) Act 2000 states it is illegal to have a nuclear waste storage facility in South Australia, in which case, the whole of South Australia has already said a clear NO to the storage of nuclear waste, and if that were to be changed by Government, all South Australians should be asked for consent.

At our own expense, Flinders Local Action Group also conducted a survey. It was posted to the people living in Hawker, Quorn and Cradock. People were simply asked for a YES, NO or UNDECIDED vote regarding storage of nuclear waste in the Flinders Ranges. Flinders Local Action Group then asked if the results could be opened and scrutinized by the CEO of the Flinders Ranges Council. FRC kindly obliged and final results showed 79% of the respondents were against having a nuclear waste repository in the Flinders Ranges.

The consideration of Indigenous support:

The consideration of indigenous support is an important factor within the Flinders Ranges and the wider community. Any support for a nuclear waste repository would firstly have to be given from the Adnyamathanha community because, in the case of Wallerberdina/Barndioota, a nuclear waste repository on that site would be invasive to their culture. Intrusion would cross cultural songlines and disturb artifacts, sacred sites and the Hookina - The Hookina is a culturally important place for Adnyamathanha women. Adnyamathanha families from Hawker and surrounding areas have been severely affected by this controversial process. It has caused great heartache, division and ill health for many people. Families and friends are feeling torn apart by the long and ongoing processes from ANSTO and the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science.

Community Benefits Program:

Another example of division. Many think the Community Benefits Program is divisive and creates an impression of bribery. Some businesses needing monetary assistance, regardless of their 'for' or 'against' opinions, are happy the money has been offered and therefore feel it is up for the taking. Others refuse to apply as they regard it as bribe money. Some people in the community were selected for paid positions, and part of their role is to reassure people that a nuclear waste repository would be a positive enhancement to the Flinders Ranges - jobs, tourism and Federal money. A few of these people have used their positions as a license to bully community members who are not in favour of a nuclear waste dump. I suggest in future jobs like these need to be screened and monitored regularly if people are to receive Federal funding for this kind of employment. Small vulnerable communities would be best served if community benefits were given in constructive growth projects, like tourism and small business, not a nuclear waste repository that offers minimal employment and destroys tourism and cultural heritage.

Wider Community Views and conclusion:

Wider community views should always be considered regarding the storage of nuclear waste. Most people would agree there needs to be a single repository for a low level nuclear waste facility somewhere in Australia but it is fundamentally important to find the right place. The Flinders Ranges is not the right place.

The intermediate nuclear waste stored at Lucas Heights should stay where it is. The Lucas Heights storage facility is purpose built for safety and has 'state of the art' security with plenty of storage availability for years to come. Why move it to a place that has massive floods,

frequent earthquakes and sometimes 50+ degree days in summer?

Submission prepared by:

Barbara Walker

