

12 March 2010

Re. National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2010

Dear members of the Legal and Constitutional Committee,

Clearly there are numerous inconsistencies with this new legislation and the Federal Government's responsibility to provide a fair and transparent process based on best practise to deal with the long lived problem of radioactive waste.

This legislation explicitly allows for the Muckaty site to be chosen for a national dump despite there being no agreement with all of the necessary traditional owners of the land. The controversy around the nomination was acknowledged at the 2008 Senate Inquiry into the CRWMA and is has been made very clear to all relevant Labour departments. This fact on its own, is reason enough that this legislation should not be put into action.

Relying on land that is volunteered rather than based on environmental and best practice considerations is highly illogical and proves that the Government is not taking seriously the risks posed by this dangerous material whom seem to be opting for, the least politically damaging on the voting cards option.

Minister Ferguson is fully aware of the resolution passed unanimously by the NT Labor Conference 2008 which called on the Federal Government to exclude the nomination Muckaty on the grounds that it "was not made with the full and informed consent of all traditional owners and affected people and as such does not comply with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act". Minister Ferguson has shown contempt to people whose land he suddenly has power over and should not be trusted to deal with the issue of radioactive waste responsibly.

It has been repeatedly stated, and agreed with by the ANSTO, ARPANSA and Australian Nuclear Association, Australia's nuclear waste can continue to be stored at Lucas Heights where the majority of the waste is produced. Why is this not being considered as a 'volunteered site'?

Why also are there such laws as the EPBC Act or the ATSIHPA Act if they are to be overridden by the Federal Government in the most important and relevant cases? This is people's lives that would be affected and important local industries in rural areas that don't have anything else to live from other than the land. Senators and Ministers alike need to come to Tennant Creek to hear directly from the people on the ground.

Thankyou,

Jayne Alexander