

Submission to Senate Committee into the National Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2010

Ben Rose (private citizen), 4/3/2010

I acknowledge that as we have small a nuclear reactor in Australia for medical purposes, there is a need to find a palce to store the nuclear waste.

However my concerns about the bill before the Senate are:

- It gives the Federal Minister the power to override the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. This should not be in the bill, as the most stringent environmental, geological and hydrological assessment should be applied to all sites considered. Any site that does not pass these assessments should be rejected
- There does not appear to be a specific limitation in the bill stating that the site will not be used to store other radioactive waste either from future nuclear reactors in Australia or from overseas. Most Australians including myself strongly oppose nuclear power generation in Australia and also any proposal to store overseas nuclear waste on Australian soil.

In my opinion it would make more sense to select a site somewhere quite close to an exsiting railway line in western NSW and construct a spur line to it. This State gains most of the benefits of the reactor and it has plenty of remote, dry, stable land. The Govt. could purchase a large pastoral property in this area, if they could obtain with the consent (with agreed compensation) of the indigenous Aboriginal owners, for extinguishment of title.

Such a site would make more sense because:

- Transport and handling of the waste would be minimized (should only require loading and loading once to and from rail wagons).
- It would be more easily accessed by those who would manage it, who would likely be based at Lucas Heights based in Sydney.
- It would still be many hundreds of kilometres away from any populated area.

Choosing Muckaty Station or any other location at the direction of the Federal Minister without at least due Federal processes of the relevant Environmental Protection and Native Title acts is not the way to a safe and equitable solution.

Sincerely,

Ben Rose

Some points you might like to include:

1. The Committee must travel to Muckaty

It is essential that the Senate Committee pay due respects to the Traditional Owners on the front line, by travelling to Tennant Creek to take evidence from them directly.

2. The case for a remote dump has never been made

The radioactive waste management debate in Australia has never looked at options other than remote waste dumps on Aboriginal land. The industry has never made the case that a remote shed is the best place for this material.

3. This bill is highly coercive

In choosing a site, the proposed bill overrides all relevant state and territory legislation as well as overriding commonwealth environmental and Aboriginal heritage protections. It also overrides private property rights of affected individuals with regards the dump site or its access route. Once a site is chosen, it will be assessed under commonwealth environmental legislation which has almost no mechanisms for preventing the project from going ahead.

4. All discretion in the hands of the Minister

The Bill places enormous power in the hands of the Minister to assess whether or not the Muckaty site should go ahead. No information is given to how this assessment will be carried out, and the bill makes it clear that local people have no right of appeal.

5. We must do better than this

Nuclear waste should be moved as little as possible, and should be stored above ground close to the point of production, close to centres of nuclear expertise and infrastructure.