

Dear Senators,

Regarding the current proposals to:

1. Expand uranium mining at extraction of water at Roxby Downs when groundwater contamination is a known hazard and when there is global drying
2. Open the Angela Pamela mine near Alice Springs despite its proximity to a large population and their water supply
3. Accept nuclear waste from overseas and store it in a waste dump anywhere in the Northern Territory

Also regarding your obligations under Principle 15 of the *Rio Declaration (1992)*<sup>1</sup>:

According to David Cole LL.B., *The Precautionary Principle – Its Origins and Role In Environmental Law* published on the website of the Australian Network of Environmental Defender's Offices:

The precautionary principle in the context of environmental protection is essentially about the management of scientific risk. It is a fundamental component of the concept of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) that was defined at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio, 1992 in:

**Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration (1992):**

***Where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.***

This means that if there is any concern at all that uranium waste and uranium mining may cause irreversible environmental degradation we should not be doing it. We all know that even under the best management there have been accidents around the world both with nuclear reactors and with attempts at storing waste.

We also know that we have no way of permanently storing the waste without it eventually leaching into the groundwater system of the planet because the planet changes and the earth moves as a result of earthquake tremors from other countries.

Australia's *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (1992)* adopts the precautionary principle as a "core element" of ESD as does the Inter-Governmental Agreement on the Environment, which is the basis for the current distribution of governmental responsibility for environmental management in Australia.

The Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* states as an object the promotion of ecologically sustainable development which includes the precautionary principle. It states that the Minister for the Environment and Heritage must take this principle into account .

Courts throughout the world are increasingly inclined to accept the principle as a means of dealing with scientific uncertainty in environmental disputes. The principle may fairly be regarded as an evidentiary tool in resolving dispute over the risks presented to the environment and to human health by certain types of development.

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Additionally, there is now a considerable body of judicial opinion placing the burden of proving the acceptability of a proposal in this respect on the proponent, not the person arguing that it is environmentally unacceptable.

The principle also acts as a guideline to administrators and the courts in making decisions involving competition between economic development and the maintenance of environmental quality where the potential impacts are unclear.

Other responsibilities that are relevant to Australia's proposal to expand the uranium industry outlined in the Rio Declaration (1992) are:

Principle 3

***The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.***

Principle 10

***Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment ...and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available.***

Principle 14

***States should effectively cooperate to discourage or prevent the relocation and transfer to other States of any activities and substances that cause severe environmental degradation or are found to be harmful to human health.***

Any expansion of uranium mining, transport of uranium or storage of waste in Australia contradicts Principle 3. What we do know about uranium mining is that it is a decision to jeopardise the '***developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations***'

In an important recent study by the US National Research Council, the Chair of the Council's research panel, Professor Richard Monson, concluded: "**The scientific research base shows that there is no threshold of exposure below which low levels of ionizing radiation can be demonstrated to be harmless or beneficial.**" (National Research Council (of the US National Academy of Sciences), 2005, "Health Risks from Exposure to Low Levels of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR VII – Phase 2)", written by the NRC's Board on Radiation Research Effects, <[www.nap.edu/books/030909156X/html](http://www.nap.edu/books/030909156X/html)>.)

The following links offer an overview of some of the known health hazards including genetic alteration of the DNA of people who have contact with radioactive emissions. As you would all be aware there is an overwhelming body of evidence available in reports worldwide about these health hazards:

- [Study finds association between cerebrovascular diseases mortality and cumulative radon exposure in French uranium miner cohort](#)
- [German uranium miners' study provides some evidence of increased risk of extrapulmonary cancers associated with radon](#)
- [Study finds increased mortality among Grants underground uranium miners, but not among uranium mill workers \(New Mexico\)](#)
- [Lung cancer among Wismut uranium miners](#)
- [Leukaemia among Wismut uranium miners](#)
- [Leukaemia among Czech uranium miners](#)
- [Long-term persistence of chromosome aberrations observed in Hungarian uranium miners](#)
- [Study Group: Contemporary Saskatchewan uranium miners' health study not scientifically feasible](#)
- [Chromosomal aberrations with former Wismut uranium miners similar to those with coal miners](#)
- [Chromosomal aberrations with former Czech uranium miners](#)
- [Chromosomal aberrations with former Wismut uranium miners](#)
- [Pulmonary fibrosis with uranium miners caused from inhalation of radon progeny](#)
- [Native American uranium miners experience higher risk of nonmalignant respiratory disease](#)
- [Chromosomal Aberrations With Namibian Uranium Mine Workers](#)
- [Risk of Cancer Incidence other than Lung Cancer with Uranium Mine and Mill Workers](#)
- [New Model for Assessment of Lung Cancer Incidence with Uranium Miners](#)
- [Uranium Mine and Mill Workers - Current Issues](#)
- [Radiation Exposure for Uranium Industry Workers](#)
- [Uranium Radiation Properties · Uranium Toxicity](#)

**Australians do not want uranium mines, we would like the government to legislate for the use of energy from renewable resources only as we are fully aware that nuclear energy will jeopardise future generations of all species. No one can argue that it is known to be safe and that is what the precautionary principle demands.**