



AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR ASSOCIATION INC

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*Member of the Pacific Nuclear Council
Member of the International Nuclear Societies Council
Affiliate Member of the World Nuclear Association*

Submission to

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

INQUIRY INTO THE COMMONWEALTH RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT BILL 2010

Australian Nuclear Association (ANA)

The Australian Nuclear Association (ANA) is an independent incorporated scientific institution made up of individuals drawn from the professions, business, government and universities, with an interest in nuclear scientific and technical topics. The ANA provides a forum for presentation, exchange and dissemination of information on the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology through the holding of regular technical meetings and national and international conferences.

Radioactive Waste in Australia

Radioactive waste has been generated in Australia as byproduct of a wide range of beneficial uses of radioactivity and radiation over many years, including operation of research reactors, production and use of medical isotopes for therapy and treatment, industrial processes and research.

Extensive national and international experience demonstrates that radioactive waste can be safely managed, stored and disposed. In many countries, the disposal of low and intermediate level radioactive waste is a standard process; many overseas disposal facilities are designed for over 500,000 cubic metres of radioactive waste; very much more than the less than 5,000 cubic metres of non-mining radioactive waste in Australia.

The ANA supports the establishment of a radioactive waste management facility for the management of radioactive waste from all Commonwealth agencies and the disposal of low level radioactive waste. There would be many advantages if the same facility could be made available to manage, store and dispose of the radioactive waste from the States and Territories to avoid duplicate facilities being established around the country.

ANA Supports the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2010

The Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2010 repeals the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005, puts in place transition arrangements to ensure

that the existing volunteer site at Muckaty Station remains an approved site and establishes a nationwide volunteer site nomination process should the Muckaty Station site (or other volunteered site on Aboriginal land) be considered unlikely to be constructed and operated.

The ANA supports this process which will facilitate the siting, construction and operation of a facility for the management of radioactive waste and disposal of low level waste. For too long the process of establishing a national radioactive waste facility has been beset by emotive arguments and exaggeration of the risks posed by radioactive waste and a radioactive waste facility. Hence, the site selection process used to date, which is based on technical criteria to select suitable sites, has so far been unsuccessful, despite 18 years of effort. The technical criteria were in accord with best international practice. There could be real advantages in moving to a volunteer process which has community involvement at all stages. The technical criteria still must be met for any proposed location.

The ANA supports 2010 Bill as a practical next step in the already protracted process of finding a suitable and acceptable site for this important facility.

Recommendation

The Australian Nuclear Association (ANA) recommends that Parliament pass the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2010.

Australian Nuclear Association
14 March 2010