

I am writing to express my concern for the nomination of the Muckaty site as a nuclear waste dump.

The nomination of the Muckaty site by the Northern Land Council was highly controversial and is strongly contested by many Traditional Owners. Mr Ferguson is also aware of the unanimous resolution passed by the NT Labor Conference in April 2008 which called on the Federal Government to exclude Muckaty on the grounds that the nomination "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". Mr Ferguson also knows that fellow Ministers Jenny Macklin, Kim Carr, Peter Garrett and Warren Snowdon among others have acknowledged the distress and opposition of many Muckaty Traditional Owners.

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. The Lucas Heights nuclear agency ANSTO is by far the biggest single source of the waste, and all the relevant organisations have acknowledged that ongoing waste storage at Lucas Heights is a viable option — the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency, the Australian Nuclear Association and even Mr Ferguson's own department. Additionally, requiring ANSTO to store its own waste is the best — and perhaps the only — way of focussing the Organisation's collective mind on the importance of waste minimisation principles.

Any site selection process ought to be based on scientific and environmental siting criteria, as well as on the principle of voluntarism. In 2005, the Howard government chose the NT, and ruled out NSW, for purely political reasons. When the federal Bureau of Resource Sciences conducted a national repository site selection study in the 1990s, informed by scientific, environmental and social criteria, the Muckaty area did not even make the short-list as a "suitable" site.

Kind regards
Miwa Tominaga