

Senator Trish Crossin
Chair, Senate Legal & Constitutional Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Crossin,

Here is a sample of public concern in Perth about the predicament of the people of Muckaly in relation to the proposed national radioactive waste facility which could be built on their traditional lands. Today a small group of people gathered on a street corner in the city to speak to any members of the public who seemed interested in this issue. Over the lunch break, 34 signed the appeal to you to have the Senate Inquiry Committee as a whole to go to Muckaly for face-to-face discussion with its traditional owners.

While the Muckaly community is sadly divided over the issue of hosting the nuclear waste facility, the great majority seem to be opposed to it. Even 25 members of the Ngapa clan signed the statement of concern by 57 Muckaly TOs back in May last year. Amy Lauder (of the Ngapa clan) who originally offered Muckaly as a site for the facility, clearly was not speaking for them.

While our event to gather signatures was small, we feel the result is significant and we hope that you will consider the opinion of those who signed.

Yours sincerely,

(Member of People for Nuclear Disarmament
which organised this event today.)

People for Nuclear Disarmament (WA)
5 King William Street
Bayswater WA 6153

Signed by Judy Blyth

Senator Trish Crossin
Chair, Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee

Re : Australia's Radioactive Waste Facility and the Aboriginal people of Muckaty Station, NT

Dear Senator Crossin,

After years of searching for a site for a Commonwealth radioactive waste facility for Australia, I am disturbed deeply that Muckaty Station out from Tennant Creek in the NT is the only site now under consideration.

For years, the traditional owners of Muckaty country fought court battles for their right to have their traditional land handed back to them, finally winning their case in 1995. Most of the indigenous clans around Muckaty strongly oppose the waste facility being built there. In October 2008, traditional owners from the Muckaty Land Trust visited Resources & Energy Minister Martin Ferguson in his Melbourne office, inviting him (unsuccessfully) to their country to talk. In May 2009 a strongly worded statement signed by 57 Muckaty people, appealed for face-to-face communication with politicians who are involved in decision-making about building the waste facility in their country. They wanted to show them the importance of Muckaty country and how burying radioactive waste there would be incompatible with the way they needed to take care of the land. That appeal was presented in the Senate last August.

There is however a small minority view among the indigenous people of Muckaty that the dump should go ahead. The government reward for allowing this would amount to millions of dollars – which indigenous proponents imagine would furnish their communities with dependable infrastructure – like good roads and schools (facilities that other Australians take for granted.)

The issue is sadly dividing the Muckaty community, most of whom feel that their pleas for consultation have been ignored by government and bureaucrats.

When in Opposition, Mr Rudd promised that the **Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005** would be repealed if Labor won. This Act allowed the overriding of indigenous opposition to a site chosen by the Commonwealth for the waste dump. Only recently has Labor's Minister for Resources and Energy, Martin Ferguson decided to repeal that Act – but "recycle" would be a better term – as his proposed Bill to replace the old would maintain the same coercive powers. It would also override the NT's nuclear waste transport legislation and bypass key Federal environmental and heritage laws.

As Chair of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee inquiring into these matters, I appeal to you to ensure that the entire Senate Committee visit the Muckaty community and consult closely with the traditional owners of the area, and that the process be a transparent one. While Australia must resolve the problem of managing its accumulating toxic radioactive wastes, imposing such a facility on a "soft target" like this remote Aboriginal community would be grossly unjust and unacceptable.

Yours sincerely,

Signature: Name (in print):
Address:.....
..... Post Code Date:..

Form Letter Received by:

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Christine Hogan
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