

In discussing the storage of Radioactive Waste it is important to go back to the second reading speech of the **National Radioactive Waste Storage Bill 2010** when the legislation was first introduced.

Minister Martin Ferguson's first sentence was:

The purpose of this bill is to establish a facility for managing, at a single site, radioactive waste currently stored at a host of locations across Australia.

The intent here is clear. The bill announces that a new facility will be constructed away from Lucas Heights to house Australia's Low Level Waste (LLW) and Intermediate Level Waste (ILW).

The reference to the committee is at odds with this intent. It is asking you to consider expanding the site at Lucas Heights. You are bound by the legislation passed by the parliament. To do otherwise is to break the law.

The bill says that

"no site can be considered as a potential location for a facility without a voluntary nomination and agreement from persons with relevant rights and interests."

And importantly

"A facility will be conditional on comprehensive environmental and regulatory approval processes. These will be conducted independently of the bill and ensure Australia adheres to International best practice."

The International best practice for storing ILW is:

In the International Atomic Energy Agency publication "General Safety Guide, No GSG-1" on page 6 has this to say about the safe disposal of ILW.

Intermediate level waste (ILW): Waste that, because of its content, particularly of long lived radionuclides, requires a greater degree of containment and isolation than that provided by near surface disposal. However, ILW needs no provision, or only limited provision, for heat dissipation during its storage and disposal. ILW may contain long lived radionuclides, in particular, alpha emitting radionuclides that will not decay to a level of activity concentration acceptable for near surface disposal during the time for which institutional controls can be relied upon. Therefore, waste in this class requires disposal at greater depths, of the order of tens of metres to a few hundred metres.

There is only one voluntary nomination with local and traditional owner support that has been nominated under the governments self nomination process that meets international best practice and that was from the Shire of Leonora.

The site is on the edge of the Victoria Desert. It is proposed to store the waste at depth underground in a body of solid granite. The site has no environmental, water or seismic issues and is remote and 16 Kilometres away from any populated area.

The duty of the PWC in this matter are clear. First they have a duty to not break the law and must reject the reference. Secondly they should comply with the law and recommend that the parliament move to give effect to the legislation by requesting that an evaluation of the Leonora proposal proceed.