

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Budget Estimates 2008-09

2 June 2008

**Question:** **BR-10**  
**Topic:** **Radioactive Waste Management**  
**Proof Hansard Page:** **E81/E83**

**Senator Milne asked:**

**Senator MILNE**—I believe Minister Ferguson received a letter on 22 April this year from 28 traditional owners of the Muckaty land trust asking for clarification about the proposed waste dump at Muckaty, and the letter says, ‘We want the government to stop and listen to us, take our word and we say no.’ Do you know whether Minister Ferguson has responded to those traditional owners yet and what he has actually said?

**Senator Carr**—I will let the officers take this. But on the previous question, when I did have responsibility for this area of policy it was fair to say that there was a range of opinions from Indigenous land holders in regard to this particular site. There was not a unanimous view in regard to a response to Muckaty station. I will let the officers deal with the latest correspondence.

**Mr Davoren**—I think the important thing to note is that there are a number of estate clans in the Muckaty trust. The people that have volunteered their land did so at meetings convened by the Northern Land Council under the rules set up under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act. There are people from some other clans who could not reach agreement on hosting a facility on their particular lands, but the particular estate clan that volunteered the land did so, as I understand it, unanimously.

**Senator MILNE**—But that was not my question. My question was: do you know if Minister Ferguson has responded to the letter from 28 traditional owners saying—

**Mr Davoren**—I have not seen the letter in the department.

**Senator Carr**—We will take that on notice.

**Senator MILNE**—Surely for the benefit of the people at Muckaty it would have been a courtesy to let them know that the reference to them does not mean that the site has been selected. You can appreciate from their point of view that they see \$3.8 million put aside for the EIS and they see Muckaty mentioned in the papers. Their assumption is obviously that the site has been chosen; it is them. Can I have some indication that the government will inform the traditional owners and others, and the Northern Territory, too, presumably?

**Mr Davoren**—That error was made clear to the Northern Territory Department of Health and to the Northern Land Council, which represents the interests of the Muckaty traditional owners in relation to land issues.

**Senator MILNE**—So they have already been informed—

**Mr Davoren**—Yes.

**Senator MILNE**—through the land council. If Minister Ferguson has responded to the traditional owners in that letter, presumably it will also be pointed out to them in that, but I will wait to get that on notice.

**Answer:**

Minister Ferguson did receive a letter dated 22 April 2008, signed by the 28 traditional owners of land within the boundaries of Muckaty Station. Address details have now been obtained for the correspondents and draft replies are being prepared.