

Submission to the Inquiry into the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management (Repeal and Consequential Amendment) Bill 2008

From The Blue Mountains Nuclear Free Group

We submit that the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005 and the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Legislation Amendment Act 2006 must be repealed and amended by this Bill.

We are a group of residents of the Blue Mountains in New South Wales who are concerned about the dangerous impacts of the nuclear fuel cycle and in particular we are concerned about the transport of nuclear waste through our community.

It is our understanding that world's best practise for the storage of radioactive waste is that it be stored and monitored onsite where it is produced, as there is no safe way to transport or dispose of radioactive waste.

This is particularly relevant to this Inquiry as the transport route from the Lucas Heights Nuclear Reactor to proposed repository sites in the Northern Territory is likely to be through our own community in the Blue Mountains, as well as others. The Great Western Highway is a winding, narrow and dangerous road with a large volume of traffic and frequent traffic accidents. A spill of nuclear waste could irretrievably damage the health of residents and the local environment which is part of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park. Transportation of radioactive waste increases the risks of accidents.

Radioactivity must not be allowed to leak into groundwater, soil or air from any transportation accident or geological repository. Our goal must be to isolate radioactivity from the biosphere for the duration of its risk.

We are also particularly concerned for the people in the Northern Territory whose health, culture and land will be endangered by the dumping of nuclear waste in their communities (especially in seismically precarious areas such as the Barkly Tablelands).

These Acts contravene the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, the Northern Territory Land Rights Act, the Judicial Review Act, the Native Title Act and the Northern Territory Government Legislation regarding transport and storage of nuclear waste. Therefore these Waste Management Acts must be repealed, as promised prior to the federal election by the ALP.

These Acts allow the building of a radioactive waste repository on Aboriginal peoples' land without their consent. This is completely unethical. What we need is transparency, intergenerational equity and good science around the issues of radioactive waste. Please recommend that these Acts be repealed and amended accordingly.

Yours sincerely

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for the Blue Mountains Nuclear Free Group