

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

It is time finally for a democratic approach to be taken to the waste dump issue in Australia. Three years now have gone since the CRWMA was passed by the Howard Government, an act that in opposition the Labour party decried as sordid, shameful and arrogant, an act that last year in the lead up to the election Kevin Rudd made a promise would be repealed if elected.

Now almost a year into Labours term of Government there has been no action taken on this statement. Now almost a year into the Rudd Government traditional owners of Mt Everard, Harts Range and Fishers Ridge still fall asleep worrying about whether their country will be one day poisoned. Now almost a year into the Rudd Government, and over two years since the 2006 amendments to the original act were passed, traditional owners of Muckaty face harassment when they speak up for country and try and protect their dreaming from being destroyed. Now almost a year into Rudd Government people from Muckaty and Harts Range still have yet to meet with Resource Minister Martin Ferguson. In fact the invitations that have been personally delivered to his office, to come to NT and sit down on country with them have been ignored.

For a Government that preaches 'proper consultation' what sign of respect is this show. Not even an acknowledgement in the form of a written letter, it has been four months since the invitation to visit Harts Range was delivered, four months. Surely the time to visit is now and the minister should make the trek to Alice Springs and meet with the traditional owners.

Moreover the CRWMA is in direct contradiction to the governments own 'proper consultation' line and thusly should be repealed. The act allows for a waste management site to be imposed on country without the consent of Traditional Owners or affected communities. This is hardly democratic, in fact one could say it's totalitarian. It seems that less than 12 months later the cries of me-too that the media latched onto in the election campaign are true.

I repeat myself again but if the Government is serious about their election promises the act would be repealed immediately and the site of Muckaty would be thrown out too in line with the Labour parties resolution at the National Conference in April 2008: "Conference understands the nomination of Muckaty as a potential radioactive dump site, made under the CRWMA legislation, 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 (ALRA). Conference calls for the Muckaty nomination to also be repealed when the CRWMA legislation is overturned."

To go back to my opening remarks if there is some form of democracy in this country this is the least that could happen. After all the traditional owners don't want it, the Central Land Council don't want it, the Northern Territory Government does not want it, the deal with Muckaty is murky around issues of consent and proper consultation. What else does the Government need? They are the voice of the people and the people in the Territory have spoken up and say NO WASTE DUMP. I think it's time the Government *actually* listened this time.

Scott Foyster