

## **Inquiry into the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management (Repeal and Consequential Amendment) Bill 2008**

Submission on behalf of the Working Group for Aboriginal Rights (WGAR)

The Working Group for Aboriginal Rights (WGAR) was formed in May of 2007 to campaign for justice for Aboriginal people and to encourage Australia to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP - which was passed by 144 nations and only voted against by Australia and three other nations).

We of WGAR are very concerned that the discriminatory legislation (CRWMA 2005 & 2006), claiming to allow the federal Australian government to ride roughshod over the rights of Aboriginal and other individuals and communities in the Northern Territory should be repealed ASAP, and we support Senator Scott Ludlam's **Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management (Repeal and Consequential Amendment) Bill 2008**.

Taking note of and agreeing with the points made in Senator Ludlam's second reading speech, (reply reproduced below), we would like to add that we have heard from a Muckety Aboriginal Community woman Elder that the proper traditional owners were never consulted and that they don't want the nuclear waste dump. She said that the Northern Land Council had only listened to two people out of more than 100 members of the Muckety Aboriginal Community.

The discriminatory legislation (CRWMA 2005 & 2006) seems to confirm many of our worst suspicions about the real motives of the Howard government, and we are distressed that Rudd's government hasn't repealed it, along with other racist Howard initiatives. Many of us believe that Howard's 'Northern Territory Intervention' was more about taking over Aboriginal Land and driving Aboriginal folks away from their outstation communities where they had some independence than about protecting Aboriginal children. That he set aside the Racial Discrimination Act (and was able to do so) is a blot on Australia's reputation, and the effect of collective punishment it involves is against international law, shameful and a cause of much distress to the First Peoples of this land. That also then Minister Mal Brough admitted publicly that he wanted to destroy the CDEP so he could quarantine Aboriginal incomes (as he wasn't able to do with the CDEP wages people were earning), many of us think that was so Aboriginal people would be vulnerable to economic coercion and be forced to give up what had been left of their heritage to gain government services that the rest of us take for granted as our rights as citizens. Not to mention that the government stole resources that CDEP workers had accumulated over the years for their communities.

When in February Kevin Rudd gave his magnificent Apology to the Stolen Generation we were thrilled and believed he would reverse these and other setbacks to the long Aboriginal struggle for full citizenship and human rights in this, their land. which has never been properly negotiated for by those of us whose family origins lie elsewhere.

As one of the banners in the October 2008 Alice Springs convergence to stop the Northern Territory Intervention mile long march put it, 'SORRY MEANS YOU DON'T DO IT AGAIN!'

When is Australia going to stop doing wrong to the First People of this land? We commend the repeal of CRWMA 2005 & 2006 as a valuable step in a good direction.

Barbara Meyer, on behalf of WGAR (the Working Group for Aboriginal Rights)