



15 November 2005

Senators,

As a resident of Katherine town, and a daughter of people who own a farm on Napier Road and a cattle station in the Katherine Region, I would like to convey my opposition to the proposed placement of a radioactive nuclear waste dump at Fisher's Ridge.

I am opposed to the: Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005; Schedule 1 – Sites; 3. Fisher's Ridge for many reasons which I will here state.

- I am greatly concerned that a delegation is not visiting Fisher's Ridge or the Katherine Region before making such a grave decision. How many residents, or experts for that matter, have the resources to convey their opinions or reservations to the committee in Canberra, or have the ability to make a submission within this shockingly short time frame? If your committee was able to see for themselves the particular site in question, as well as the assets and shortcomings of our region, I do not doubt that this site would quickly be taken off your list.
- Fisher's Ridge is geologically and environmentally unsuitable as a potential location for this dump.
 - There are limestone sinkholes, that the residents of the surrounding cattle station will be only too willing to show you, which make the land unstable and unreliable.
 - The site is at the headwaters of the Little Roper River. Here we have a great deal of rainfall and a water table that is the envy of other parts of Australia. Nearby cattle stations as well as the Napier Road and Fox Road agricultural areas rely on this clean water supply.
 - These cattle stations export from Australia, and the area produces melons, the price and reputation of which are threatened by the building of a radioactive nuclear waste dump nearby.
 - The Katherine Region also is abundant with wildlife that contributes to biodiversity. This wildlife is already threatened by the influx of cane toads and the ingestion of radioactive material from the Delamere bombing range, further threats to biodiversity in the region should be avoided. Our biodiversity means that we "in the middle of nowhere" as Dr Brendan Nelson likes to see it, do have

something worth protecting, and maybe it is actually as important as the security of people in Sydney or Canberra.

- The threat of accidents when dealing with radioactive material ought not to be scoffed at. Recently, the Jabiluka uranium mine threatened the Jabiru township's water supply with the misuse of chemicals, and also threatened the safety of the township and Kakadu wildlife by allowing an unclean mini-excavator out of the bounds of the mine. Consequently, I am sorry to say that I do not trust fellow Territorians to deal appropriately with radioactive nuclear waste.
- Fisher's Ridge is in close proximity to farming and cattle stations, but is also within a proximity to Katherine township and Indigenous communities that concerns me.
 - The township has recently gotten a boost by the movement of tourists by rail. Indigenous communities are also making efforts at tourism development. The perceptions of our region as pristine and natural by environmentally conscious young European backpackers cannot be maintained when a nuclear waste dump is in our neighbourhood.
 - The growth potential of Katherine is threatened when potential residents realise their children will have to be raised near the dump and fed on produce that is grown even closer to it.
 - The opposition of the people of the Katherine Region to having a radioactive nuclear waste dump nearby is not able to be garnered as well as I would hope for, as a great many people on our electoral roll are families which belong to the RAAF. These families do not often feel they have the freedom to voice their opposition to such politically troublesome matters. If you were to ask members in informal settings they may feel comfortable to tell you that they do not believe they possess the free speech that other residents do.
- The location of Fisher's Ridge means that radioactive nuclear waste will have to be transported an awful long way to get to its resting place.
 - Waste will have to be transported all the way from Lucas Heights to Fisher's Ridge. Is this really a solution to the placement of nuclear waste that ensures safety and security for the people of Australia? There is the potential for road accidents as well as the interference of terrorists.
 - Waste will also be returned to us from France from 2011, if Fisher's Ridge ends up accommodating this waste it also has an awful long way to travel from any Australian port.
 - The issue of national security is not just one that is a concern in Sydney or Canberra. How many security staff will be employed to look after this large facility when we are perceived as being in the "middle of nowhere"? The consequences of the destruction of the

facility by terrorists are very significant even when we are not in a city.

- How will a clean up be instigated if a terrorist action were to take place, or even a genuine accident, when there will surely be a minimum staff employed at this site? Wouldn't it be a better option to place the waste in a facility that is very secure and accommodated by a great many experts that can deal with just such disasters, as there already is at Lucas Heights?
- We have been virtually threatened in the media by politicians who argue for a waste dump to be built in the Northern Territory, such as David Tollner, that we must look after our country's nuclear waste because it is a byproduct of essential products and services.
 - But if only our Federal Government were willing to use a combination of alternative energy sources we could have even cleaner power. Yes, wind power and water power do not work well as isolated sources of power, but a combination of sources such as these does work effectively.
 - And if non-reactor technologies were promoted by the Federal Government to be used to produce the materials necessary for medicine, such waste dump facilities would not be needed. Currently, it is clear we already have enough space to house the medical waste material anyway, so that argument about the necessity of the site is quite hollow.
- Finally, this site may not be considered appropriate at this time for accommodating radioactive nuclear waste permanently, but that may change. Although we are told it is only to be a repository, if the Katherine Region is perceived as a place that is willing to accept such a repository no doubt a site deemed appropriate to accommodate the waste permanently will be found in the region as a great many places are too politically risky. So I believe it is fair for people in the region to express their concerns now about our potentially becoming the custodians of the waste that will be returned to us from France. It is so saddening to imagine that the Indigenous people of our region should become the custodians of such material, when previously they were considered the custodians of something so much more unique and valuable.

I therefore respectfully ask the Senators of this Committee to deem the Fisher's Ridge site an unsuitable place to accommodate radioactive nuclear waste.

Thankyou,
Kylie Schubert