

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee

Inquiry into the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

Submission no: 53

Received: 17/11/2005

Submitter: Gerry Wood MLA
Independent Member for Nelson

Organisation:

Address: PO Box 120
HOWARD SPRINGS NT 0835

Phone: 08 8982 1302

Fax: 08 8983 1638

Email: Electorate.nelson@nt.gov.au

08 89831638



Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

GERRY WOOD MLA

Member for Nelson

PO Box 120 Howard Springs NT 0835
 Nelson Electorate Office
 Shop 5 Howard Springs Shopping Centre
 Howard Springs NT 0835
 Email: electorate.nelson@nt.gov.au

Nelson office telephone: 08 8983 1302
 Fax: 08 8983 1638
 Mobile: 0428 698 037
 Parliament House: 08 8946 1591
 Home: 08 8983 1237

FAX

Date: 17/11/05	Number of Pages: 4	Fax No: 02 6277 5706
To: COMMITTEE SECRETARY		
From: GERRY WOOD		
Subject: COMMONWEALTH RADIATION WASTE MANAGEMENT BILL		

Comments:

COMMENTS RE CRW MANAGEMENT BILL

IF I AM REQUIRED TO ATTEND THE INQUIRY

COULD YOU LET ME KNOW ASAP AS I HAVE

TO BE IN ALICE SPRINGS AROUND THE SAME TIME

ON ANOTHER MATTER.



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Independent Member for Nelson

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Committee Secretary
Senate Employment, Workplace Relation and education Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Comments on Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

I am not supportive of the Commonwealth overriding NT Legislation.

I realise that the Commonwealth has powers to override NT laws under the constitution.

I also realise that the Commonwealth has been backed into a corner because none of the States or Territories wish to support a national radioactive storage waste storage facility.

Because I support the Lucas Heights facility and the work it does in research, radiopharmaceuticals, engineering, geophysiology and waste control, and because I believe this facility is important to the welfare of all Australians then I support the concept of a radioactive waste storage facility.

If that means that facility ends up in the NT so be it.

At least it would mean that the Territory could show the rest of Australia that it

- supports the Lucas Heights facility and all the benefits it brings to our nation
- supports the principle that as a nation we should be responsible for the waste from Lucas Heights

- supports the concept that it would be sensible to store, using world's best practice, Australia's low level and intermediate level waste in a purpose built facility away from populated areas
- supports the fact that radioactive waste can be stored and transported safely

1. Site Selection

I would prefer the site to have been in South Australia which was identified by the Commonwealth as the most suitable site in Australia. When this was no longer an option I would have preferred our nation's leaders to work through this issue and come up with a solution. This has not occurred and I therefore understand the actions of the Commonwealth in introducing this bill.

However a major concern is that the Commonwealth has picked three sites which were selected because they were defence land sites rather than selected on criteria best suitable for a radioactive waste facility. It maybe that one of these sites will fit the criteria but the defence criteria used for selection seems more about politics and the implementation of the Commonwealth Waste Management Bill rather than good science.

Therefore, I think that other options should be looked at for site selection. Obviously the NT Government and the Central Land Council are totally opposed to any discussions on alternative sites. But the Northern Land Council has certainly indicated willingness to partake in discussion about the siting of a waste facility.

The amendments in the Bill allowing nominations from Land Councils are therefore welcome. It is also good that there is room for the Chief Minister to nominate sites and even though that is unlikely, I would hope that common sense would prevail and that the Territory Government would show some leadership and be involved in the process instead of continuing with its present policy.

Recommendation 1

The Commonwealth continue to attempt to negotiate with the Territory to identify the most appropriate site for the waste facility.

2. Environmental Safeguards

I was also concerned that environmental issues may have been circumvented by the overriding of Territory environmental laws. I note the Minister (Dr Nelson) did mention the relevant Commonwealth legislation will still comply (insofar as it does not prevent the establishment of the facility). As I take an active interest in environmental impacts of developments, I will be monitoring compliance with environmental safeguards with the facility.

Recommendation 2

The Commonwealth should not overlook environmental considerations in the urgency of establishing this facility.

08 89831638

In summary, I believe Australia needs Lucas Heights and we need a waste facility supported by environmental safeguards. This is a national issue but it seems parochialism and politics have got in the road of a national solution. Because this approach has unfortunately failed, then the Territory should show leadership, work with the Commonwealth and find a site for the waste.

Yours sincerely



Gerry Wood MLA
Independent Member for Nelson
16/11/05

I would welcome the opportunity to expand on my submission by a presentation at the public hearing.