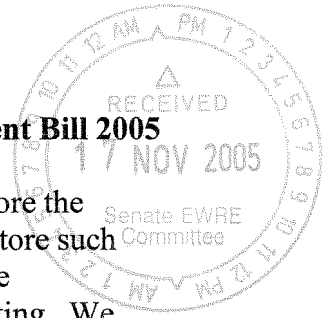


Submission regarding the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005



Nuclear waste remains dangerous for a very long time indeed. It is therefore the responsibility of this government to make every attempt to transport and store such waste in a manner that enhances the safety of all Australians, including the generations to come who will inherit the waste that this generation is creating. We owe it to ourselves and those who come after us to make the best decision *now*.

In order to decide on the most suitable site for such a facility, all areas of the country must be treated equally and objectively. The identification of the best site should be an open and independent undertaking. Consideration must be given to geographical, geological, climatic, demographic, topographic and transport issues and everyone's safety should be paramount.

It is not good enough for any Australian that this government should select just three possible sites adjacent to the second and third largest towns in the Northern Territory and exclude the rest of the country from consideration. This is particularly so following pre-election promises that the Territory would not be used for dumping nuclear waste.

These sites have not been selected on any objective basis whatsoever, but purely out of political expediency. It comes down to the fact that Territorians are less equal than other Australians and are about to become less equal still if this government has its way.

Addressing the subject of the Fisher's Ridge site near Katherine, there are a number of issues that should be investigated. The underlying rock strata form a series of large aquifers that feed into both the Roper and Daly Rivers via other waterways. The risking of these pristine waters is unthinkable. The Daly River, which would become polluted via the King and Katherine Rivers, has recently been nominated as being of "national conservation significance" by WWF and others.

Are those responsible for promoting this site aware that it is subject to seismic tremors from time-to-time? Or monsoonal rains and flooding? Are they aware of how far off-target some of the visiting pilots at Tindal drop their practice bombs? Have they considered the transport risks, not only near the site, but for every kilometre that the waste will have to travel to reach the facility? Have they consulted those on the routes that the waste will take about their concerns? The answer to all of these questions appears to be "No!"

The Katherine area depends largely on tourism and the primary industry. Should future promotions for this glorious area contain health warnings? When the inevitable leak happens, will the world want to buy Katherine beef and mangoes? A nuclear waste site will not offer any jobs or other benefits to locals but will inevitably reduce the town of Katherine to almost ghost status.

Please give Territorians the rights that other Australians enjoy. Give us the right to be treated equally and at the same time allow a just process to make a sane decision about the siting of this facility, if not for us, then for posterity.

Kathryn and Nigel Olliver Katherine NT