

The Chair
Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee
Senator Judith Troeth



Dear Madam,

The following is a précis of our submission to your committee. The full submission will be forwarded by Monday 21 November as has been discussed and agreed upon with Peter Hallahan, the committee secretary.

Précis submission to the Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee

Subject; review of Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

A Bill for an Act to make provision in relation to the selection for, and establishment and operation of, a radioactive waste management facility, and for related purposes

This submission addresses Schedule 1.3 of the Bill and is submitted by Davina Hornsby, Chairperson on behalf of the Katherine Nuclear Dump Action Group.
Contact details:

In this submission, we, the members of the Katherine No Nuclear Dump Action Group, would like to bring to the committee's attention the fact that Fishers Ridge (referred to as 'the site'), in the shire of Katherine, Northern Territory, is in every respect unsuitable for the location of a nuclear waste repository for any level of nuclear or radioactive waste.

Our submission will address the unsuitability as pertains to the local environment, geology, hydrological systems, meteorology and geography of the site.

In researching for information on the storage of nuclear waste Commonwealth Government paper titled 'Methods for choosing the right site' a discussion paper for Phase 1 of a project announced by the Hon. Simon Crean, the then Minister for Primary Industries and Energy to identify a suitable site for a national repository for radioactive waste.

Under the heading 'Selecting a repository site', the paper states that;

A suitable repository site must have long-term stability and attributes that will enable the wastes to be isolated so that there is no unacceptable risk to people or the environment either while it is in operation or after the site has closed. (.)

This paper addresses many of the issues that are causing our group great concern in the selection of Fishers Ridge as a safe site for a nuclear or radioactive repository.

The Primary selection criteria are as follows;

- low rainfall, free from flooding, good surface drainage, stable geomorphology;
- a generally stable hydro geological setting and water table at least 5 metres below the buried waste;
- geology and hydrogeology amenable to modelling groundwater and radionuclide movements;
- away from known or anticipated tectonic, seismic or volcanic activity...;
- no groundwater that is potable or suitable for agriculture can be contaminated;
- low population density with little prospect for increase or development;
- geochemical and geotechnical properties that inhibit radionuclide migration and facilitate repository operations.

Of all of these points, Fishers Ridge and the District of Katherine only qualify under 'away from known or anticipated tectonic, seismic or volcanic activity...'

This paper goes on to outline other considerations of which more concerns are raised.

In our full submission we will supply data that addresses each of the criteria that are not met, demonstrating that in each case Fishers Ridge is the exact opposite of the criteria required for the acceptable storage of nuclear or radioactive waste.