

To : Senator Judith Troethe

of Mr John Carr

02 6277 5706

From: Kathy Bannister

No of pages : 3

Date : 17. 11. 05

Re: Inquiry into Commonwealth
Radioactive Waste Management
Bill 2005.

Please find a two page letter following
which is my submission to the
Senate Inquiry.

Thank you for this opportunity to
register my concerns.

Kathy Bannister

Senator Judith Troethe
Chair
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee
Inquiry into Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Senator Troethe and Committee members,

I write to express my concerns over the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005. I consider that the issue of radioactive waste disposal needs to be addressed in a scientific and well considered way. I am not convinced that any scientifically rigorous process has taken place in order to ensure that the three sites nominated in the Bill are chosen as the safest and most practical sites in relation to transport, long term environmental stability and physical security of radioactive waste materials. The government has failed to give us in the Northern Territory any good reason for rushing this and urgently imposing its solution to nuclear waste management. In fact the Bill appears intent on overriding other legislated interests in environmental or heritage protection (see sections 6 and 10).

Prior to the last federal election in 1994 our Northern Territory representatives in the government, Senator Nigel Scullion and David Tollner, gave us uncategorical assurance that there would be no waste dump located in the Northern Territory. I think that the Prime Minister himself, during a visit to the NT, may have backed these men on these assurances during the election campaign. Then suddenly within a year of the election the government announces three possible sites in the NT for the siting of a nuclear waste dump followed very quickly by this legislation which I understand over rides any existing provisions of federal or territory a law that could hinder or delay the dump plan. This includes over riding the government's own legislation for Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation passed only in 1999. Such actions undermine community confidence in the decisions being made and undermine my confidence in the intelligence of the government and its future intentions.

I do not believe the claims that a waste dump is required urgently in order to maintain access to high quality nuclear medicines. These assertions are not backed by senior medical professionals including the former head of research at the Lucas Heights nuclear facility Professor Barry Allen. I do not believe that a rigorous and scientific process has been carried out to ascertain whether the scheduled sites are the best and safest sites for a nuclear waste facility. The International Atomic Energy Agency maintains that that such facilities also require community consent and a reasonable degree of social agreement from the host society in order to provide a facility with minimal risks.

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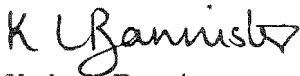
All political parties in the NT are opposed to this legislation. Even thinking conservative, Territorians are given reason to doubt the integrity of the government on this issue. It is unnecessarily heavy handed and anti-democratic. It removes the ability of local territory and state governments to adequately reflect genuine concerns and aspirations of the communities they represent. Better public policy and decisions will be made through scientific research, negotiation and inclusion rather than by being imposed by a government determined to get its own ill-considered way.

Your hurried senate inquiry is a poor substitute for the wide ranging inquiry that makes sense under the weighty circumstances. There is a need to bring together all the best scientific knowledge and all the best practical knowledge and interests with the communities that need to support and safeguard the security of a nuclear waste dump in a process that instills confidence that the best solutions have been reached. Effective consultations with the host community/communities can only have long term benefits for the project. Effective consultation with any indigenous traditional owners can also bring about sound decision making based on generations of knowledge about the land and its resources both above and below the ground. Some rural communities may in fact welcome a nuclear waste facility and other benefits that may accompany it if the decision is arrived at through a transparent and respectful consultative process and with sound scientifically backed safety assurances. So far, the government has only undermined our confidence in the process, the outcome and in our elected members.

I urge that full public and large scale inquiry or commission take place over an extended period of time before a nuclear waste dump is imposed on any community in Australia.

Therefore I urge that the Senate inquiry reject the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005 as anti democratic and a flawed process rightly belonging to a country lead by a fascist regime or a family dominated by an aggressive and unintelligent bully.

Yours sincerely



Kathryn Bannister
17 November 2005