

Jurjevic, Dijana (SEN)

From: Lois Achimovich [achimova@iinet.net.au]
Sent: Thursday, 17 November 2005 7:02 PM
To: EET, Committee (SEN)
Subject: Nuclear waste dump

The Chair - Senator Judith Troeth
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee Inquiry into Commonwealth
Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

Dear Senator Troeth and colleagues

As a medical doctor I am extremely concerned about the brevity and superficiality of the current discussion on the nuclear industry and in particular the approval of a dump in the NT.

I understand that your committee will not even inspect the site and its likely impact on citizens, including Aboriginal people, whose lives will be affected by this decision.

The greatest worry I have is that the history of the nuclear industry is a history of denial of the major and irreversible health effects of radiation. This denial has led to a rush to profits over a concern for the health of this and future generations. We have the example of the Maralinga tests, where massive amounts of radioactive material was blown into the atmosphere, poisoning milk and falling out over many years leading inevitably to a contribution to the burgeoning incidence of cancer on the planet. (Breast Cancer since the 60s has more than doubled in incidence - prostate cancer is heading that way)

A dump has different dangers - leaching into the soil, poisoning workers, affecting ground water - and the attraction to terrorists.

Yes - best practice is relatively safe - but if you don't stall this process, there is no safeguard against a cheap alternative like those at Maralinga. Will the government fund something like Sweden is developing, miles underground - or will they continue to allow foreign companies to determine how they can make most money?

What is the hurry? Is the stalling of the storage facility at Yucca Mountain in the US the reason that the prime minister is hastening to help the US with its self-generated problem?

Australia is cursed with a small population mainly resident near the sea - no-one knows what is going on in the so-called empty part of the continent. We depend on our politicians - particularly senators - to demand that the government act as a democratic body, not a juggernaut over-riding the meagre rights we have.

The federal government is not to be trusted. The present legislation would allow the proposed NT waste dump to be turned into an international radioactive waste dump housing highly radioactive materials from all around the world - forever. This from a government which promised that a dump in the NT would never happen.

Please exercise what power you have to slow this process so that this atrocious plan can be stopped and an international plan for the safe storage of radioactive waste can be developed.

You have children and grandchildren - for God's sake try to get your heads around the science involved, the permanent environmental problem they would have, the potential health effects over thousands of years.

Is this the legacy we wish to leave behind?

Yours faithfully

Lois Achimovich MBBS FRANZCP