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From: Joel Catchlove [madhorsemanofmarrakesh@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, 18 November 2005 9:37 AM
To: EET, Committee (SEN)
Subject: ATTN: Senator Judith Troeth; Submission to the Inquiry into Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

Attention: The Chair, Senator Judith Troeth

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee
Inquiry into Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

I write to express my concern regarding the imposition of a nuclear waste dump in the Northern Territory. As the Inquiry would be well aware, in June 2005 the people of NT overwhelmingly elected a government for whom a policy of no nuclear dumping and no further uranium mines was a central policy. Despite this, the Federal Government seems determined to impose the dump regardless of significant, continuing public opposition in a move that appears to disregard the central tenets of our democracy.

To my understanding there has been no consultation with the community or government of the Northern Territory. Equally, there has been no prior consultation with Indigenous groups, whose unique connection with place seems to be utterly disregarded, or with those living on potential transport routes. It is a demonstration of exceedingly poor public policy that the Federal Government appears intent on imposing its will regardless of the consequences rather than engaging the community through a process of genuine consultation and inclusion.

Certainly, my understanding of this Inquiry's own conduct is symptomatic of this disregard, particularly expressed in the committee's reluctance to travel to the Northern Territory for hearings. Equally, the short length of the inquiry demonstrates a lack of understanding regarding the special needs of particular groups, especially Indigenous communities for whom extensive community consultation is necessary over a significant period of time. Allowing only two weeks for consultation on such complex issues limits the committee in its ability to explore such issues to the necessary extent.

In addition, during the South Australian campaign against a national nuclear waste dump it was demonstrated convincingly that a national nuclear waste dump was unnecessary. Instead, a policy of above-ground, monitored storage of nuclear waste at the site of its production was advocated. This policy remains sound. In contrast to the Federal Government's plans, which suggest an attitude of "out of sight, out of mind", storing waste on-site where it can be easily accessed and monitored remains the most convincing option – particularly when the potential sites in the Northern Territory were selected without scientific basis.

Joel Catchlove

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