

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

16<sup>th</sup> November 2005

**RE: Inquiry into Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005**

Dear Senator Troeth,

I am writing to express my concern over the introduction of the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005. The 7 year process undertaken by the Federal Government to establish a national disposal and storage site(s) for radioactive waste has failed to develop an effective strategy for responsible management of waste primarily generated by the Lucas Heights Nuclear Reactor. The recent move to impose radioactive waste in the Northern Territory demonstrates a failure to resolve these issues and a reckless attempt at expediency to allow for a new reactor to generate more.

Concerns specific to legislation -

- there has been no consultation with the NT government or community, traditional Aboriginal landowners or those on the proposed transport routes.
- the overriding of existing provisions of federal and territory law that could hinder or delay the dump plan is a disturbing precedent that greatly undermines community confidence in the Commonwealth's actions on this issue - and its future intentions.
- the sites chosen for the NT dump were not selected through any scientific assessment.
- all political parties in the NT are opposed to the imposition of the dump.
- the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) maintains that such facilities require community consent and a reasonable degree of 'social license'. This legislation is inconsistent with this international obligation.
- this legislation has been criticised by the Senate Scrutiny of Bills Committee for its adverse impacts 'on personal rights and liberties'.
- the legislation is heavy handed and anti-democratic. It removes the ability of local, territory and state governments to adequately reflect the concerns and aspirations of the communities they represent.
- good public policy is developed through negotiation and inclusion - not imposed by governments determined to get their way no matter what.

Internationally there remains no proven permanent facility for intermediate level waste (referred to as high level in Europe and US.) established. Shallow burial of low level waste and housing intermediate waste for several decades in central Australia is a 1950's cold war approach of the nuclear industry. Given the nature and long term imposition radioactive demands of future generations Government must take a policy approach that ensures responsibility of the generator and minimises / removes future production.

Yours sincerely



Bruce Thompson