

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee

Inquiry into the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

Submission no: 176

Received: 18/11/05

Submitter: Ms Sue McKinnon
Convenor

Organisation: NT Greens

Address: PO Box 331
NIGHTCLIFF NT 0814

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

The NT Greens reject the proposed Bill. We recommend that this committee condemn the anti-democratic nature and design of the Bill, and call upon all senators to vote against its introduction.

That doesn't distinguish us – all NT political parties are opposed to the suggestion that the Northern Territory should have a nuclear dump forced upon us against our will.

This opposition is a matter of principle for the Greens – we oppose all stages of the uranium industry, from mining to reactors, as presenting an unacceptable burden of dangerous radioactive pollution for future generations to come. Wastes with a half-life extending beyond millions of years represent an incomprehensible burden for our descendants to manage far beyond the foreseeable future. This cost directly conflicts with a fundamental principle of ecological sustainability – that of intergenerational equity. The nuclear industry cannot be considered sustainable, because it lays such this enormous environmental burden upon not just the next generation, but upon all generations to come.

For other NT political parties, their firmly stated opposition, while undoubtedly principled, may also be a matter of survival. Territorians have voted overwhelmingly against radioactive waste in recent elections. Politicians, both Territory and Federal, have sensed the strong opposition to the dumping of long-lived radioactive waste in the Territory, and been at pains to assure voters that they will oppose a Dump. The current NT Government was elected on a strong anti-nuclear platform, having introduced NT legislation against the threat of a dump, and gone to the polls pledging that there will be no new uranium mines in the NT. That election saw the NT CLP senator intervene on behalf of his party, and promise that the Territory wouldn't get a dump. 'Not on my watch', pledged Senator Scullion, in a bid to defuse an issue that appeared to threaten his party's standing in the NT poll.

Senator Scullion's promise echoed that given by the federal environment minister Ian Campbell, who told us during the federal election campaign that 'Territorians can take that as an absolute, categorical assurance.' These direct (although ultimately empty) promises were a response to the clear democratic wishes of the people of the NT.

This Bill, on the other hand, is an assault on the same clear democratic wishes of the people of the NT.

The Bill is anti-democratic in that it defies the stated policies of all political parties (Territory and Federal), and contradicts explicit election pledges. The Bill further defies democracy by seeking to negate laws made by the Northern Territory by a popularly elected government for protection against the environmental threats posed by radioactive materials. Furthermore, the Bill has been recognised to defy well established standards and conventions for procedural fairness, personal rights and liberties and judicial and parliamentary review.

This three-tiered assault on democratic values and standards is, along with the uranium industry, an abomination which cannot be accepted.

Not on our watch.

The NT Greens will use every resource at our disposal to support the broad opposition in the Northern Territory to the irresponsible production and dumping of long-lived radioactive wastes.

Senators can take that as an absolute categorical assurance.

The NT Greens will welcome any opportunity to assist the Committee further.