

McMahon, Rosalind (SEN)

From: Irene Schardijn [is2004@bigpond.com]
Sent: Friday, 18 November 2005 3:35 PM
To: EET, Committee (SEN)
Cc: Scullion, Nigel (Senator); Troeth, Judith (Senator)
Subject: submission to the Inquiry into Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005

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

Dear Ms Troeth and Mr Scullion,

I am writing to express my concerns about the construction of a radioactive dump in the NT.

I understand that in July 2004 the Federal government failed in its attempt to impose a low-level radioactive waste dump in South Australia. Now, having previously promised that no waste dump would be sited in the NT, it wants to force a low and intermediate level radioactive waste dump on the NT. It has selected three possible locations (near Katherine and Alice Springs) and introduced legislation into Federal parliament that would prevent the NT government or the community from doing anything to 'hinder or delay' the construction of a waste dump. Environment and Indigenous groups are working with the wider community, local government, and landholders to prevent this unnecessary and dangerous dump. The Commonwealth legislation is now subject to a Senate Committee Inquiry - for just two weeks!

I strongly oppose the construction of the dump and this new legislation for the following reasons:

- * the federal government has failed to make any compelling case for the urgency of this 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 federal 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 - effectively forever.

- * the federal government earlier gave an "absolute categorical assurance" to the NT that there would be no nuclear dump imposed. This legislation is in complete conflict with this earlier promise.

- * the Inquiry period is far too short to deal with the complexity of the issues involved and it is insulting that the committee has not bothered to travel to the NT to hear directly from the most affected community.

- * the claims about the need for the dump in order to maintain access to high quality nuclear medicine are wrong and are contradicted by senior medical professionals including the former head of medical research at the Lucas Heights nuclear facility - Professor Barry Allen.

- * 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.

I urge you to listen to the opinion of the population.

Sincerely,

Irene E Schardijn

Ms. Schardijn is a member of the Senate Scrutiny of Bills Committee.