



**Australian Government**

**Department of Education, Science and Training**

Mr John Carter  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Carter

**Inquiry Into the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Legislation  
Amendment Bill 2006**

I refer to the above inquiry and the Department's appearance before the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee on 27 November 2006.

An issue that the Committee was particularly interested in was the detail of discussions between the Northern Land Council (NLC) and the Department regarding possible nomination of Aboriginal land for the proposed Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Facility.

Officials advised the Committee that the Department was not in a position to divulge the details of its discussions with the NLC because of the NLC's specific request that the Commonwealth treat the discussions confidentially. The committee sought details for this position and whether there was a written agreement on the matter.

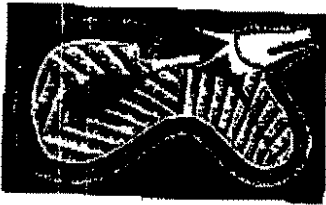
While I can confirm that there is no written agreement, by way of assistance to the Committee I wish to provide the attached letter from Mr John Daly, Chairman, NLC, to the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, dated 30 May 2006 that clearly indicates the NLC's request that discussions be treated confidentially. The NLC has no objection to the release of this letter to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Jessie Borthwick'.

Jessie Borthwick  
General Manager  
Science Group

29 November 2006



# Northern Land Council

ABN 66 227 513 388

Address all correspondence to:  
**CHAIRMAN**  
 PO Box 42921  
 CASUARINA NT 0811

9 Rawling Street, Casuarina NT 0810  
 Phone: (08) 8920 5100  
 Fax: (08) 8945 2833  
 Freecall: 1800 645 398

30 May 2006

Our Ref: LO1:05/854

Hon. Julie Bishop  
 Minister for Education, Science and Training  
 PO Box 6022  
 House of Representatives  
 Parliament House  
 Canberra ACT 2600

**FAXED**  
 20060506

Fax: (02) 6273 4117

Dear Minister

## COMMONWEALTH RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITY

I write, on behalf of the Northern Land Council (NLC), to express my appreciation for the valuable and professional assistance provided by departmental officers and officers of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) regarding radioactive waste and other uranium issues.

This assistance has included a briefing to the NLC Full Council in October 2005, as well as the comprehensive presentation of information to the NLC Executive Council by ANSTO at the Lucas Heights reactor in Sydney in 2006.

The NLC appreciated the Commonwealth Government's preparedness last year to consider and include amendments which ensured the continuance of statutory procedural rights and associated environmental and sacred site protection.

I am pleased that the NLC was thus in a position to support the *Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005*.

The reliable and detailed information provided to the NLC, particularly regarding environmental and safety issues, has generated considerable interest amongst traditional owners within the NLC's region.

A number of groups have indicated that they would be prepared to consider whether a radioactive waste facility may be safely located on their traditional country as part of a land use agreement.

The areas indicated include both Aboriginal land and non-Aboriginal land (including land vested in the Northern Territory Land Corporation).

In relation to non-Aboriginal land it would be necessary that, in due course, the Chief Minister perform her functions as to nominating a site in accordance with law - and in the interests of Territorians and all Australians.

ROHHEKOLA  
 PO Box 453  
 Rostov NT 0894  
 Ph: (08) 8975 8145  
 Fax: (08) 8975 8146

JABINU  
 PO Box 18  
 Jabiru NT 0806  
 Ph: (08) 8929 9410  
 Fax: (08) 8929 9400

KATHERINE  
 PO Box 326  
 Katherine NT 0881  
 Ph: (08) 8973 2441  
 Fax: (08) 8973 2180

NGUKURR  
 Ph: 08  
 via Katherine NT 0881  
 Ph: (08) 8976 1755  
 Fax: (08) 8976 1801

MULLINBATH  
 PO Box 520  
 Mullellath NT 0881  
 Ph: (08) 8957 3822  
 Fax: (08) 8987 1324

RAINEHURST  
 PO Box 1243  
 Rainehurst NT 0821  
 Ph: (08) 8931 1910  
 Fax: (08) 8931 1875

TENNANT CREEK  
 PO Box 55  
 Tennant Creek NT 0801  
 Ph: (08) 8932 3723  
 Fax: (08) 8932 1000

TIMBER CREEK  
 43 Wilson Street  
 via Katherine NT 0881  
 Ph: (08) 8975 0788  
 Fax: (08) 8975 0388

The NLC will conduct preliminary meetings with these groups with a view to ascertaining whether a formal proposal may be developed for further consideration.

I trust you will appreciate that at this stage indications made by traditional owners regarding a number of areas of Aboriginal land (and also non-Aboriginal land) are preliminary, and that until such time as consultations are complete the NLC cannot publicly release information as to the identity of the Aboriginal groups or as to the locations of relevant land.

The requirements of the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988*, of course, require this approach, as does the confidentiality which ordinarily attracts to commercial matters.

In these circumstances it would be appreciated if the Commonwealth Government would also ensure that information of the above nature is treated confidentially.

The NLC looks forward to conducting preliminary meetings, and to working with departmental and ANSTO officers regarding this and other uranium related issues.

Yours sincerely



John Daly  
CHAIRMAN

cc Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Hon Mal Brough, (02) 6273 4122 E;