

Submission to:
Standing Committee On Foreign Affairs, Defence And Trade
Inquiry into the Australian Participants in British Nuclear Tests (Treatment)
Bill 2006
Email: fadt.sen@aph.gov.au

Friends of the Earth, Australia
Jim Green B.Med.Sci. (Hons.) PhD
National nuclear campaigner
jim.green@foe.org.au 0417 318 368

23/10/06

Friends of the Earth, Australia (FoE) welcomes the fact that after decades of neglect by successive governments, there is finally some slight relief in the form of health care to some nuclear veterans.

However, FoE agrees with the Australian Nuclear Veterans Association (ANVA) that the provisions of the Australian Participants in British Nuclear Weapons Tests (Treatment) Bill 2006 do not go far enough in extending adequate compensation coverage and support to nuclear veterans.

FoE asks the Standing Committee to endorse ANVA's request for
* full coverage under the Veterans Entitlement Act to be extended to all of those military personnel who are bona fide British Nuclear Weapons Tests participants and whose names appear in the Government's nominal roll, and to those civilians who were fully employed by the Federal Government and were present during the actual tests or may have been involved in the cleanup period after the actual tests.

* or at the very least, immediate full implementation of the Clarke Committee's Recommendations.

From our review of the controversy over the health study, it appears that ANVA and others have good reason to be concerned about the methodology (e.g. questionable inclusions and exclusions on the roll) and interpretations

(questionable attempts to ascribe the increased cancer incidence to anything but radiation exposure).

It is disappointing that the Minister for Veterans Affairs, Bruce Billson, has reneged on his previous call for nuclear veterans' service to be declared non-warlike hazardous service. That was also a recommendation of the Clarke Review into Veterans Entitlements in 2002. Because these promises and recommendations have been ditched, nuclear veterans are not given the chance to apply for a disability pension for war related injuries. It also means their widows cannot apply for a pension when the Veteran has died of his war injuries.

FoE asks that the Committee give serious, non-partisan consideration to the views expressed by armed forces veterans including the submission by physicist Jack Lonergan:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/fadt_ctte/nuclear_tests_bills_06/submissions/sublist.htm

or direct download

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/fadt_ctte/nuclear_tests_bills_06/submissions/sub01.pdf

While it may be too harsh a judgement of DVA, the Department's handling of the health study is reminiscent of the Department of Education, Science and Training's spectacular mismanagement of the Maralinga 'clean up' in the 1990s. Even now, tonnes of debris contaminated with kilograms of plutonium are buried in shallow, unlined pits in totally unsuitable geology - a flagrant breach of the government's own standards for disposing of long-lived radioactive waste (no shallow burial). And the government and even the puppet regulator ARPANSA have the nerve to call the clean up 'world's best practice' though it would not be tolerated in the UK, the US or many other countries. Articles about the 'clean up' by scientific whistleblowers are posted at www.geocities.com/jimgreen3/#bwt.

FoE cannot claim to have detailed, expert knowledge about the recent health study but if requested we would gladly discuss related issues with the Committee, including the botched 'clean up'.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Green

Friends of the Earth, Australia.