

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

RE: Senate inquiry into the Australian Participants in British Nuclear Tests
(Treatment) Bill 2006

Submission From: Patrick Byrt

Date: 23 October 2006

One of THE unknown issues of Australian Health - radioactive PM1 particulate

Attachments:	Sr90vCa-p3.jpg	335K
	Sr90vCa-p2.jpg	214K
	Sr90vCa-p5.jpg	251K
	Sr90vCa-p4.jpg	126K
	Sr90vCa-p1.jpg	193K

I refer to the reported comment in The Advertiser on Saturday, 14 October 2006 that there is no official acknowledgement of liability in the Commonwealth regarding the cancer in veterans from the British atomic tests that is now being treated for free.

I ask this Inquiry into some Australian Participants in British Nuclear Tests, what about the cancers in Adelaide and South Australian residents from the fallout of the October 11 atomic test that caused serious fallout over Adelaide on 12 October 1956 ?

For that matter, what about the free treatment of cancers caused in the Australian population by the fallout across Australia from the entire series of British atomic tests ?

I note for your attention in this regard the statistics about the mortality of Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal women in particular, reported in The Advertiser in the same week that show they have significant higher risks from cancers that include some of those that are capable of arising from the ingestion and/or inhalation of radionuclide particulate:

[INDIGENOUS HEALTH Cancer rate higher](#) The Advertiser, 10-10-2006, Ed: 1 - State, Pg: 020, 104 words, NEWS

ABORIGINAL women are more than three times likely to die from cervical and kidney cancer than other women, a study has found. Cancer of the stomach and oesophagus are far more likely to kill Aboriginal men. The first-ever report into cancer mortality for Aboriginal NSW residents, published yesterday in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, says cancer death rates are 66 per cent higher for Aboriginal men and 59 percent higher for women among than [sic] non-indigenous people.

How could the United Kingdom ever be pressed to address all the lethal health impacts of the fallout from atomic testing on all the like affected Australian Aboriginal populations without a like analysis ?

I have forwarded relevant fallout charts that indicate radioactive rain and dust may have fallen out with lethal consequences for many tragically afflicted fellow Australians who no doubt have no idea that they have been irradiated from British atomic test particulate fallout.

Please see the 2004 report of a ten year study of health impacts that may be related to mass inhalation of the fallout particulate by Aboriginal people, and how they suffer from it: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200408/s1181995.htm>

There was a mass inhalation of particulate fallout on 12 October 1956 - Sunday 12 October 2006 was 50 years since Adelaide and parts of rural South Australia were severely irradiated by fallout from a 1956 atomic test.

It is fact that on 11 October 1956 a test was conducted at Maralinga that deposited substantial background radiation on the city of Adelaide on 12 October 1956. Lord Penney in the 1984 Royal Commission into nuclear testing spoke about this test. I was present at the Commission and heard his testimony. It was horrific to hear what he revealed about how the mushroom cloud was affected by a side wind coming in from the Timor Sea to the northwest at some 10,000 feet whereupon a significant amount of the radioactive debris material in the cloud was blown southeast in a cigar shape towards the Williamstown area north of Adelaide. The remainder of the cloud went east at some thirty thousand feet to precipitate out over Lismore in NSW when passing over there and being deposited in a rainstorm. There had an horrific impact on the east coast milk bowl of that area in 1956. The Lismore milk quarantine standards that applied from 12 October 1956 were only those that previously had been so woefully applied at the Windscale reactor disaster in the UK with the milk barely being kept from use and sale for some 6 weeks.

More horrifically for the South Australian Narungga and Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal peoples, the deadly material that went southeast, not only contaminated Adelaide and its people, water supplies (evidently the reservoir at Williamstown) and food sources of all descriptions, it passed over and contaminated the traditional lands of the Narungga people (then incarcerated under the Aboriginal protectorate system of "dog licences" at Point Pearce on the Yorke Peninsula), and continued beyond Adelaide in the same direction also to directly contaminate the traditional lands and waters of the Ngarrindjeri people in the Lower River Murray, Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, and the Coorong.

There is an oral history in the Ngarrindjeri people indicating possible impacts from the radioactivity evidently deposited in the watercourses of the River Murray in the lower region that may have been responsible for massive unseasonal fish deaths. There were periods following the inundation of turbid flood waters in the last century when particular species of fish (e.g. - callop etc) died on en masse from suffocation owing to the silting up of their gills from the fine deposits of silt, muds and other soils stirred up into the flow of the stream by flood waters from the Darling and other tributaries bringing turbid inflow into the lower river. These fish were a traditional bounty for the Ngarrindjeri and were expected at times antecedent to seasonal flooding by those living a traditional river life, as far as I have understood it.

But be that as it may, this natural phenomenon had a strictly seasonal occurrence, which meant the affected fish floated upside down with red gills visible on the water surface. There had been a disturbing occurrence of this phenomenon during the mid-1950's period of the atomic testing, apparently outside the range of seasonal expectations. These 'poisoned' fish were not known of course to be possibly radioactive by those who harvested this bounty.

This is just a graphic example of the types of impacts that seem to have been visited on Narungga and Ngarrindjeri peoples by the impacts of the test on 11 October 1956, which have never been considered, publicly revealed, or humanly remedied, let alone examined. The contamination of the "bush tucker" food chains of the Narungga and Ngarrindjeri peoples, who were isolated in non-traditional concentrations in the former mission stations of Point McLeay and Point Pearce throughout the 1950's, has never been recognized as a possibility by Australia. The fact of the fringe camp dwelling of the Ngarrindjeri "rikkan", who lived in and along the Coorong, at Meningie, along the entrance to Lake Alexandrina (the 'mildi') south of Wellington both at Murragee on the Wellington East side and at Wellington West on Karpary Road, and up along the course of the lower region of the River Murray from below Tailm Bend to Nildotti and beyond above Mannum, has not ever been considered in the assessment of just what impacts this particular deposit of radioactive material on 12 October 1956 had on the future health of the people living a traditional "bush tucker and water side" lifestyle, outcast and segregated from the white township life of store bought food stuffs.

These two Aboriginal peoples in particular were still definitely living quite closely with and off the land in 1956, despite the intrusion of a European lifestyle into their dietary habits. It is this factor that makes the irradiation of their lands, waters, and traditional "bush tucker" and marine and inland waters foodstuffs of such serious import to their future health and lives.

Rural non-Indigenous people had a securer social system, established mainly for their communal benefit and convenience, and its industry and economy secured a wide range of staples and other foodstuffs for them whose provenance was not as absolutely connected with the local area in which they lived, and so was less likely to be contaminated by any local fallout.

The abysmal indices for Aboriginal health in all categories are not inconsistent with long-term terminal and socio-pathological outcomes deriving in significant part from atomic testing.

The social policies adopted prior to the 1967 Referendum in South Australia for the inhabitants of these two concentrations camps, were designed to fling the inhabitants into contact with an urban lifestyle without prior investigation of just how the tests may have impacted on the future health of their inhabitants, who until then had in the main been living an outcast rural lifestyle quite segregated from the white rural communities which had taken over the Indigenous traditional lands and were benefiting from the incarceration of these Aboriginal people as a cheap or slave labour rural work force.

The Narungga and Ngarrindjeri people living in fringe camps or on the former mission stations eked out their livelihoods from a basic mix of living off the local land and waters, along with whatever "european lifestyle" foods South Australian society had made available through their acceptance of a european lifestyle revolving around shearing, railway working and other menial and unskilled rural jobs at the very bottom of the primary industry ladder. Those in the Ngarrindjeri fringe camps were often castigated for being "rikkan" or not living through the mission, and survived on traditional "bush tucker" as eked out by whatever supplies closer proximity to white town communities may have provided when there was any means to obtain it. This was an existence that saw land and waters recently contaminated with 1956 fallout provide a mainstay of the individual diet. The direct possibility of long-term health impacts from ingesting radioactive decay particles present in the food chain after 12 October 1956 has never been addressed for them.

Instead, social policy saw that there were "opportunities" made for them to leave the rural scene and their traditional lands and to go and take up an urban lifestyle in the city. This was not conducive to the recognition and discovery of health impacts from the testing. In fact, the social deviancy that naturally resulted from this forced re-dispossession led to the quick creation of a criminalised class of Adelaide "urban" Aboriginal people, whose subsequent and current morbidity became a signpost indicating that smoking, diabetes, alcohol, drugs, violence and the exigencies of urban living were the principal causes of their renown early death and chronic ill-health. The 1990's Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Royal Commission elicited some most disturbing information about the type of consequences for the re-dispossession of these people that occurred when strong moves were made to assimilate them with the white urban community of Adelaide. No epidemiological study has ever been done of the impacts of the 11 October 1956 test on Adelaide's population let alone any proper study of the disastrous impacts on the lives of the Narungga and Ngarrindjeri peoples, including the social impacts that have been so adverse to them that arise solely from their re-dislocation.

This deplorable conduct on the part of government needs to be ventilated and not kept closeted. The manner in which Aboriginal South Australians have not been accorded those full human rights, to which Australia became party in the regime of the international human rights underwritten by Australia in signing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, is a shame of indescribable ignominy still. There is a public responsibility incumbent on all Australian representatives to uncover the depth of this injustice and work to remedy it. I can only applaud the Inquiry for having made some small step in the right direction to disclosing the full iniquity visited on Australian people by the atomic testing. I request the Inquiry to continue this direction and extend the terms of Inquiry to Aboriginal people.

The impact of radioactive particulate of around one (1) micron on Indigenous people right across Australia from the west to east coast and from the south to the north is of deep concern.

Patrick T. Byrt – 25 October 2006 (Additional information circulated to Inquiry)