

From:
To: [Legal and Constitutional, Committee \(SEN\);](#)
Subject: Submission to the Senate Inquiry re Proposed Nuclear dump site
Date: Tuesday, 9 March 2010 12:38:33 PM

Julie Dennett, Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600 Australia

Dear Ms Dennett

Submission to the senate Enquiry re Nuclear Waste Disposal

We are particularly concerned that aboriginal people's land may be used for a purpose that they may not fully understand. The potential consequences of turning their land and heritage into a dump is something that their children and descendants will be stuck with for a very long time and this also is a matter of great concern.

In general nuclear waste should not be moved any more than is absolutely necessary. Every move is potentially dangerous. It should be stored above ground close to the point of production. As close as possible to centres of nuclear expertise and infrastructure is the safest place for it. It should not be transported unnecessarily long distances so that people in more populated areas are spared to either having to look at it or be affected by it in any way.

Options other than remote waste dumps on Aboriginal land in Australia have not been explored. The argument that a remote shed is the best place for this material has not been proven. Too much power is in the hands of one person - the Minister who has the power to assess whether or not the Muckaty site should go ahead. No information is given as to how this assessment will be carried out. Surprisingly, the bill makes it clear that local people have no right of appeal.

The bill as proposed overrides all relevant state and territory legislation as well as overriding commonwealth environmental and Aboriginal heritage protections. It also overrides private property rights of affected individuals with regards to the dump site or its access route. Once a site is chosen, it will be assessed under commonwealth environmental legislation which has almost no mechanisms for preventing the project from going ahead. There are not enough checks and balances yet again for this proposal.

If it is approved and becomes a reality, it is difficult to see how this

will enhance the lives of aboriginal people living in the area. Some of them appear to be being beguiled by the offer of material gain which is not something that is inherent in their tradition and which has done so much damage to their culture over the last two centuries. It will be a sad day if a future Prime Minister has to apologise for further damage to aboriginal people for something which was so poorly thought out in 2010.

Finally, it is to be hoped that due consultation is undertaken with people in the area, and not from the distance of Canberra and that the Senate Committee travels to Tennant Creek to take direct evidence and really attempts to listen and heed what is said to them.

Joan and Alan McColl

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