To Senate Inquiry into - Proposed Nuclear Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2010

Thank you to the Senate for the opportunity to express concerns about this bill. I may have not followed protocols, but have just put down some recommendations for consideration,

Thank you, Judy Whistler.

Submission to t he Senate Inquiry

1. This Bill is to allow the development of a facility for managing radioactive wastes from medical, industrial and research uses of radioactive materials in Australia.

I note this does not include commercial usage but does include industrial usage - does it then legally exclude wastes from commercial nuclear reactors ? Such a possibility would be surely dealt with through very open puclic discussion and pucblic assessment of the risks and processes.

> **I recommend the Senat consider a section be included to specifically exclude radioactive waste from commercial nuclear reactors.**

2. Precautionary Principle. Given the unbelievably long term implications and dangers of these wastes, a precautionary approach would include examination of the creation of the problem and the possibility of reducing the continuance of the problem - that is by not producing such radioactive wastes unless totally unavoidable The safe disposal of radioactive wastes is the most formidable problem facing the nuclear industry and one of the most dangerous problems the world faces - not to be taken lightly. The justification for the proposed Radioactive storage is the stockpiling of radioactive wastes from our reactor at Lucas Heights , research industrial and medical usage - and industrial usage. Some examples of option on non-production of future wastes are -

Radionuclides as used in medicine can be produced via a reactor or via cyclotron (or particle accelerators). The major difference is that the cyclotron may produce only one type of radionuclide at a time, a reactor may produce many different ones simultaneously. There is the option of providing nuclear medicine through cyclotrons, avoiding the need for a nuclear reactor to provide nuclear medicines and the expensive problem of the nuclear waste. Has this option been fully investigated How cost effective is it when the on-going costs of storage and risk, technical and other forms of management included in the costing.

Smoke detectors currently promoted contain radioactive materials and thence radioactive wastes There is an alternative available in the photo-electric smoke detectors that are non-ionizing and non-radio-active.

> **Recommend that the Senate has or commissions a full investigation into alternatives to the production of radioactive waste products, including the present and long term costs, government , insurance and other subsidies that would be incurred by the government and the tax payers that this be carried out by someone/a group that is not (& has not been) beholden or involved in the nuclear industry**

If this has been done, please reexamine the study - can it provide a way forward that does not involve nuclear reactor and continually increasing radioactive waste products - that would go a long way to showing a government (and an opposition) committed to reducing radioactive wastes for a safe future for us and our australian environment, and not committing huge burden to future and current tax payers and governments

<u>3. Accepted Principles for selection of a site for the storage of radioactive wastes</u>

A widely accepted basic principle for the disposal of radioactive wastes is not to choose a site in an earthquake prone area.

It appears that Muckaty, the chosen site is in fact subject to earthquakes of varying strengths. As the site may be used for thousands of years, why is such a site even considered - what story does this tell to the rest of the world.? With due respect to the difficulties faced in disposing of radioactive wastes, the chosen site should avoid earthquake prone areas.

> **Recommend strongly that the site chosen not be in an earthquake area and that the proposed Bill exclude consideration of any such sites on the grounds of danger to current and future populations.**

4. Costing of a radioactive waste materials site.

What is the total cost estimation of a proposed facility - Who will underwrite the potential costs for negative impacts - Is there any Insurance Company that will do this or is it the community through our governments that will do this.

> **Recommend that the Insurance costs associated with such a facility, including risks to employees and the Australian population through contaminated environment be met by a private Insurance company, not the general public. If this cannot be done then to store above ground and take all steps to limit future production of radioactive wastes in Australia, eliminating an extraordinarily expensive and never-ending problem for future Australia.**

5. Secrecy

A more open approach to the proposed Bill and the proposed facility is needed to keep faith with the people of Australia , and specifically to the Aboriginal group who appear to be bought off with several million dollars. We look to the Senate Inquiry to ensure this.

Currently the government consultation process does not look good, and undermines some of the excellent reconciliation activities work that the has been undertaken. I understand a letter was tabled in the Senate in 2009 signed by 57 Aboriginal traditional owners of Mackaty Land Trust area imploring the Minister Fergusson to meet them - This has apparently not happened the government negotiating mainly with that sector of the aboriginal tribal owners of the land who will agree with the proposed facility.

> **Recommend Minister Fergusson hold full and open discussiion with all members of the Muckaty Land Trust.**

.6. What is low level nuclear waste - following quote covers it, and does show that we we do not need to produce so much / if not minimal radioactive waste - Why not do it if it is at all possible ?? It cannot be more than the on-going cost of a waste storage facility **Low-level waste includes the remainder of radioactive wastes and materials generated in power plants, such as contaminated reactor water, plus those wastes created in medical laboratories, hospitals, and industry. "Low level" *does not* mean "not dangerous," though. Although its radioactivity is usually less concentrated than that of high-level waste, low-level waste can be dangerous for up to tens of thousands of years. Most low-level wastes come from reactors.**

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment, I apologise for the lack of detail and references, but have only just hear of the Senate Inquiry

Best Wishes for an outcome that will look to safe future for us and our environment and still supply the medical, research and industry needs.

Thank you,

Judy Whistler