

**To:** [Legal and Constitutional, Committee \(SEN\):](#)  
**Subject:** Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act  
**Date:** Sunday, 7 March 2010 10:47:13 AM

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Dear Senators of the Legal and Constitutional Committee,

I wish to submit the following in relation to the Inquiry into the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act.

One of the most important issues which must be investigated by the Committee is the location of the proposed nuclear waste 'dump'.

Ethically it is extremely wrong for the location of a nuclear waste dump to only ever have been considered on remote Aboriginal land. This demonstrates a blatant cynicism in exploiting Aboriginal peoples to avoid facing electoral backlash for locating a dump near a city or politically important electorate. Industry has never made the case for a remote dump and in terms of rapid response to any form of disaster or careful management of nuclear waste, a remote site is extremely impractical. Nuclear waste should be moved as little as possible, and should be stored above ground close to the point of production, close to centres of nuclear expertise and infrastructure; this will go a long way to ensuring careful management and rapid response by experts to any issues arising.

Furthermore, giving local people no right of appeal and concentrating all decision-making with the Minister is highly undemocratic. I hope this Committee will amend and 'democratise' this aspect of the Bill, giving all local people right to appeal and demanding that the Minister's means of assessing the site be made public. Such legislation cannot undermine our strong democratic traditions.

Additionally this Bill is coercive. A Bill that overrides all Commonwealth environmental and Aboriginal heritage legislation is clearly poorly formulated policy where one can predictably say its' passing will lead to significant environmental degradation and poor management of extremely important Aboriginal heritage. Such measures in a Radioactive Waste Management Act cannot be allowed. If the public were told all legislation protecting the environment of Sydney Harbour, and all Heritage legislation regulating the management of Sydney's churches/temples/mosques/shrines and sacred sites were to be overridden for a new nuclear development on the harbour, there would be significant backlash. I speculate for this reason the proposed radioactive waste dump is to be built in an isolated Aboriginal community, so the public can be let down without too much backlash. Sustainable and non-harmful environmental practices and total respect for Aboriginal heritage must be included in this Bill which has likely impacts on both that even lay people like myself can foresee.

I do not accept the assessing of the proposed site under environmental legislation as a sufficient consideration of environmental destruction caused by the set up and ongoing management of a nuclear waste dump. The Bill itself must contain a specific and all-encompassing environmental management plan to protect local ecosystems.

Lastly I believe the Committee should travel to Muckaty in conducting this Inquiry. It is important that decision-makers pay respect to the Traditional Owners and other locals who could be affected by a proposed waste dump, and take evidence from those clearly most important to this Inquiry. The locals must be consulted directly, they have

the greatest stake.

Yours sincerely,

Rufus Coffield-Feith