

SUBMISSION

REGARDING THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE NATIONAL RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANGEMENT BILL

To whom it may Concern,

This opening phrase is interesting for there are not many cases I can think of where the issue is of concern for such a large party. In fact I think the issues surrounding the new Radioactive Waste Management Bill are of concern for all Australians, and with potential impacts for the world.

I would like to firstly of all talk about the nomination of Muckaty as a potential waste dump site. This site has been chosen purely for political expediency, and indeed has many scientific problems and was never suggested by any scientific assessment. With an issue as important as the long term storage of radioactive waste, a rigorous scientific assessment is required to give the site nomination any credibility. Some of the issues identified with the nomination of the Muckaty site as a national nuclear waste dump site include the fact that the water table is quite high in the area, and with freak storms occurring more regularly, this is a matter which could have severe impacts. The site is also situated on a fault line with an earthquake occurring in the region as recently as mid February. These are very obvious reasons as to why the nomination of Muckaty is inappropriate for a national nuclear waste dump. There are many more reasons such as the strong opposition of the local community which this new bill tabled by Martin Ferguson seeks to override.

I understand that the government is concerned about finding a site and an acceptable solution for positioning a nuclear waste dump facility in Australia. But many more positive and safe processes have been suggested. An inventory of the existing nuclear waste in Australia has still not occurred and should be. Site suggestions should be the result of a rigorous scientific assessment. Community negotiation and local government negotiation should occur. I believe the government is concerned about what to do if there is no place in Australia willing to accept a nuclear waste dump – surely this would be seen as political suicide. And I wish that we had listened to the many millions of voices over the ages that have opposed uranium mining and the development of a nuclear industry and thus avoided this problem all together. This is not the case however, and we must lie in the bed we have made. And in the case of the Muckaty community it seems that people who have gained nothing from the existence of the nuclear industry would be lumped with a great problem and responsibility, unfair to the extreme.

It seems then, that a great responsibility has befallen the Australian Government – to find a solution to this problem that is as wise and fair as possible. And well thought out. Creating a bill, (or rather – reinventing an existing bill) which overrides the rights of people is suggestive of a government leadership which ignores the necessary processes required for the wisest solution to be reached. This Bill centralises decisions about the nuclear waste dump site to the Minister without outlining what assessment methods would be undertaken. It is arrogant and unwise at best – and disastrous in the extreme at worst. I hope that the government will override this new bill and that wiser heads will prevail.

Sincerely, Neylan Lisa Aykut