

Chapter 2

Community sentiment

2.1 This chapter explores stakeholder views regarding how broad community support is being assessed and the mechanisms available for wider community views to be incorporated into the selection process.

2.2 Nuclear science is contentious and while it has the potential to bring many benefits to society, it is not without cost and associated risk. Individuals make an assessment of whether the benefits outweigh the potential costs, or the potential downsides are too great to take the risk. While there are a few people who seem to have an open mind, most people are polarised at either end of the ideological spectrum. It appears that the same ideological polarisation exists within the communities being asked to consider hosting a NRWFMF. It is therefore unsurprising that the views expressed by stakeholders on the terms of reference almost universally reflect these polarised positions.

2.3 There is no doubt that the selection process has significantly impacted the communities of Hawker and Kimba. As is often the case with particularly polarising issues, strong views on both sides have the potential to fracture and irreparably damage the social fabric of previously tight and cohesive communities.

2.4 The Flinders Local Action Group outlined what had happened in Hawker:

Our community fell into two camps—those who were for and those who were against—and there were people in between who were not talking or engaging, and we've never got together since. Some of those divisions are very deep and we don't know how they'll ever be repaired. It's a terrible thing to do to small communities like ours and Kimba, to have this sort of division in normally close-knit communities that need to rally together in times of fire and all sorts of stuff.¹

2.5 Some stakeholders may not be willing to express a view publicly as they rely on the whole community. For example, the committee heard in Hawker of the experiences of Mr John Hennessy:

I am probably the only business owner in Hawker that's made a public stand on this—for it, that is. I believe the reason is that they don't want to receive the vitriol that I've received on Facebook. There's strong approval for this project amongst business owners. I'm not saying they're all in favour of it, but there is strong approval. But not one other has made a public statement that I'm aware of.²

2.6 Mr Ian Carpenter noted relationships with other community members with different views had to be managed sensitively:

1 Greg Bannon, Flinders Local Action Group, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2018, p. 27.

2 John Hennessy, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2018, p. 10.

I've got very good friends that are against it, and my answer to them is: 'Let's not talk about it. Let's stay friends. You've got your views; I've got mine. Let's leave it at that.' I'm not saying that that's happened all the way along. I have lost a good friendship over it.³

2.7 Community division was also apparent within the Adnyamathanha community, the traditional owners of the site near Hawker:

This proposed waste facility threatens our cultural heritage and the process undertaken for its selection and assessment has fractured the social fabric of our community.⁴

Broad community support

2.8 The *National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012* (the Act) does not require, define or specify a minimum level of 'broad community support' in selecting a site. Rather, it provides the Minister with broad discretion to make decisions in relation to nominations and site selection, taking into account comments received from the nominator and those with a right or interest in the land.⁵

2.9 According to DIIS:

The Minister has committed that the Facility will not be placed in an unwilling host community or, in other words, a community in which it does not enjoy broad support (noting that no individual or group has a right of veto). Community support is an important but by no means the only factor that the Minister will consider in taking forward a nomination and selecting a site.⁶

2.10 More information was given at the hearing by Mr Bruce Wilson from DIIS:

[The Minister] will take into account the community support, he will take into account the technical factors associated with each site and the cost of establishing it at each site and he will form a view based on all those factors, taking into account how community support is determined.⁷

2.11 DIIS has released community sentiment reports following earlier community votes, including the *Community Sentiment Survey* for Hawker (2016) and the *Summary of Engagement in Kimba* (2016). DIIS anticipates that more community sentiment reports will be released following the conclusion of further community consultation.⁸

3 Ian Carpenter, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2018, pp. 10–11.

4 Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association, *Supplementary Submission 42.2*, p. 39.

5 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Submission 40*, p. 10.

6 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Submission 40*, p. 10.

7 Bruce Wilson, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Committee Hansard*, 2 August 2018, p. 29.

8 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Submission 40*, p. 10.

2.12 Professor Peta Ashworth, Co-Chair of the Independent Assessment Panel (IAP), submitted that:

The need for 'broad community support' has always been a high priority of the site selection process...However, it was agreed that this criterion could not be assessed through the usual MCSA [Multi Criteria Site Analysis] process. Instead, it needed to be done in conjunction with potential host communities and affected stakeholders once they had time to consider all of the information about the NRWFMF process.

Additionally, it was agreed that a combination of qualitative (observations, written submissions, face to face meetings and other engagement activities) and quantitative (surveys, polls) data would be required to inform the final decision making of the site selection process. The IAP cautioned that any insights in relation to community sentiment emerging from surveys, should be treated with care and only used in conjunction with all of the other information gathered through the consultation process.⁹

2.13 The *Community Sentiment Survey* was conducted by ORIMA Research as part of the initial evaluation for those sites accepted as part of the initial nomination process, including Kimba and Hawker.

2.14 Following the nomination of additional sites in Kimba, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) was engaged by the District Council of Kimba to undertake a ballot of community sentiment for moving to Stage 2 of the selection process.

2.15 With respect to the community sentiment vote at the end of Phase 2, DIIS has indicated that:

The Kimba Council and Flinders Ranges Council will hold a community vote in each community from 20 August 2018 in a manner consistent with the provisions of the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999*. The votes will be run by the Australian Electoral Commission on behalf of the two councils.¹⁰

Stakeholder comments

2.16 A number of stakeholders highlighted the vagueness of the 'broad community support' concept being used in the selection process.¹¹ For example, No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA argued that:

The definition of broad community support has been inconsistent throughout the entire process, with differences occurring both over time and between sites. Despite a strong focus on its need, no definitive definition of

9 Professor Peta Ashworth, *Submission 52*, p. 3.

10 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Supplementary Submission 40.1*, [p. 1].

11 See, for example, Toni Scott, *Submission 44*; Darren and Kellie Hunt, *Submission 80*; Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, *Submission 7*; Chloe Hanan, *Submission 61*; Ellenor Day, *Submission 67*; Justine Major, *Submission 16*; Jodie Joyce, *Submission 33*; and Brian Cant, *Submission 49*.

'broad community support' has been given, allowing the Minister to effectively 'move the goal posts' at whim.¹²

2.17 At the public hearing in Kimba, Mr Peter Woolford from No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA noted that:

...with no definitive measurement of what constitutes broad community support this has caused much contention and a lack of trust in the process. It effectively allows the minister to manipulate a definition to suit his results.¹³

2.18 The Conservation Council SA stated that:

...confidence in the decision-making process has been eroded by the flawed and divisive consultation, lack of definition and geographic definition of the community and stakeholders which, in the case of the Flinders community, almost 3 years into the process, has not been finalised.¹⁴

2.19 Ms Sue Woolford noted that the clarity surrounding the measurement of community sentiment was not provided upfront:

All the information is just being strung out and given out in a little dribs and drabs. Be clear right from the start of the process, and define how it's being measured. That would have stopped a lot of angst in this community.¹⁵

2.20 Mr Greg Bannon noted that a clear understanding of how community support is to be determined was needed to provide trust within the community:

...it will be a running sore if the logic—and the algorithm, as you say—is not known to us and it just comes out as a decision...¹⁶

2.21 A number of submitters highlighted that both DIIS and Minister Canavan had indicated that around 65 per cent community support would be considered reflective of 'broad community' consent.¹⁷ For example, No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA stated in their submission that DIIS's Principle Advisor, Mr Bruce Wilson was reported to have said in May 2016 to a community gathering that:

There is no magic number.

...

12 No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA, *Submission 46*, [p. 2].

13 Peter Woolford, No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2018, p. 34.

14 Conservation Council SA, *Submission 55*, p. 3.

15 Sue Woolford, No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2018, p. 45.

16 Greg Bannon, Flinders Local Action Group, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2018, p. 33.

17 See also Darren and Kellie Hunt, *Submission 80*; and Heather Baldock, *Submission 64*.

The community survey indicated 65 per cent. Now I would think the Minister needed at least that, if not more, for a final siting decision.¹⁸

2.22 No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA also submitted that:

In March 2017, then Senator Nick Xenophon put a question on notice to Minister Canavan asking him 'what does 'broad community consent' mean to the government?' and 'what percentage does the government say constitutes 'broad community consent?'" Minister Canavan replied that the support would need to be in the vicinity of 65%, and that submissions and 'neighbouring views' would also be taken into consideration. This figure of 65% was also given to us by Minister Canavan during several subsequent meetings.¹⁹

2.23 Despite this declaration, the Minister chose to move to Phase 2 in Kimba with a level of support significantly less than 65 per cent. According to Mr Darren and Mrs Kellie Hunt:

Having stated in the Senate that he would require a number in the vicinity of 65% of the community voting to progress with the proposal, Minister Canavan chose to push Kimba into phase two of the process with a supporting vote of 57%. This result is subjective to the number of people who chose to participate in the vote, in actual fact those in support represented 49.94% of those within the community eligible to vote.²⁰

2.24 No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA provided their perspective on what should be considered broad community support:

We strongly believe that a percentage of 67% (two-thirds) of the community should be a minimum required level of support for this facility to proceed, and that this figure should be of ALL eligible voters, not only those who choose to vote...²¹

2.25 In Hawker, Mr Greg Bannon clarified that, in his view, 'broad community support' has a different meaning to 'majority support':

More than just a majority; it's broad. That must imply—I mean, the citizens jury had a two-thirds majority. That to me is a fairly convincing broad majority. You can nitpick at a few per cent either way, but a majority is not enough. I think broad must have a certain margin in it.²²

18 Natalie Whiting, 'Hawker locals reject nuclear dump proposed for Wallerberdina station at packed public hearing', *ABC News*, 7 May 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-07/locals-reject-wallerberdina-nuclear-dump-at-hawker-meeting/7393082> (accessed 30 July 2018).

19 No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA, *Submission 46*, [p. 3].

20 Darren and Kellie Hunt, *Submission 80*, [p. 2].

21 No Radioactive Waste in Kimba or SA, *Submission 46*, [p. 3].

22 Greg Bannon, Flinders Local Action Group, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2018, p. 33.

2.26 While there were many criticisms of the 'broad community support' concept, some stakeholders argued in its defence.²³ For example, Dr Ben Heard, a member of the IAP and Executive Director of Bright New World, explained that the IAP placed a heavy weighting on the criteria of an adequate level of support within a potential host community to progress to detailed assessment. In Dr Heard's assessment, the AEC vote in Kimba which returned a 57.4 per cent majority (from an 80 per cent response rate) represented 'an *adequate* level of support for progressing to further consultation'.²⁴

2.27 Mrs Kerri Cliff commented on the relatively high response rate for the voluntary vote:

...the fact that 88 per cent of the population participated in a vote is huge. In a voluntary vote anywhere in the world, that is a very high number of participation.²⁵

2.28 Dr Heard also noted that the notion of 'community support' is dynamic and influenced by the actions of stakeholders. Further, the measurement of community support will depend on whether stakeholder views are treated equally or given relative importance due to proximity or responsibilities for regional oversight and representation. Dr Heard concluded that:

Reducing 'broad community support' to a single number is an oversimplification of a complex process. This should be avoided.²⁶

2.29 DIIS outlined several reasons why it did not consider setting a mandated definition or threshold to be appropriate:

- The Act provides the Minister with absolute discretion over site nomination and selection decisions. Defining a minimum required threshold could undermine and interfere with the Minister exercising his future discretion in selecting a site.
- It is consistent with the Minister's absolute discretion under the Act that he or she be at liberty to make a decision based on his or her judgment as to what constitutes broad community support in the circumstances. The Minister is ideally placed to make that assessment.
- Defining a minimum threshold could also be inconsistent with approval processes that allow input from the community (such as EPBC and ARPANSA processes) and could interfere with the relevant decision makers' discretion under those processes.
- There is no precedent, nationally or internationally, that could authoritatively be used to set such a threshold in these or similar circumstances. Any threshold, by definition, would be arbitrary in nature.

23 See also Frank Harris, *Submission 24*.

24 Bright New World, *Submission 15*, [p. 4].

25 Kerri Cliff, Working for Kimba's Future Group, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2018, p. 32.

26 Bright New World, *Submission 15*, [p. 4].

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- Furthermore, what constitutes 'broad community support' will necessarily vary depending on the different interest groups involved in a particular site. Setting a mandated threshold would (depending on where it is set) potentially disenfranchise minority elements of the community or result in a minority group having an automatic veto or dictating power over the majority.²⁷

2.30 Various stakeholders agreed that a number of factors, not just community support, were important in the site selection process. For example, Mrs Kerri and Mr Trevor Cliff believed that:

It is simply not a black and white issue and we elect our government representatives to make informed decisions based on all of the presented information.²⁸

2.31 Similarly, Mr Matthew and Mrs Megan Lienert submitted that:

We understand broad community support to be about assessing all the information gathered from a wide range of sources on the views and opinions of the facility moving forward to the next stage of the process. This information as a collective of evidence will then be used to determine if a majority of the community are in support of the facility...Broad community support must take into account those that will be mostly impacted in any way and should be based on evidence.²⁹

2.32 Indeed, some submitters from the Kimba region considered that there was broad community support to move further through the selection process.³⁰

Voting process

2.33 Various stakeholders were critical of the ORIMA Research survey process that was used to assess community sentiment for the original site nominations. For example, the No Dump Alliance submitted that:

This telephone survey was incomplete and inadequate because it did not survey the entire population of the area and was biased because it only surveyed residents with landline telephones. The flawed survey only asked residents if they wanted to proceed to the evaluation of the site and not actually build a facility. Flinders Ranges council residents have not had an opportunity for a complete postal vote conducted by the AEC.³¹

27 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Submission 40*, p. 11.

28 Kerri and Trevor Cliff, *Submission 65*, [p. 3].

29 Matthew and Megan Lienert, *Submission 53*, [p. 2].

30 See, for example, Daryl Koch, *Submission 75*; Melanie Orman, *Submission 77*; Katrina Koch, *Submission 28*; and Andrew Baldock, *Submission 38*.

31 No Dump Alliance, *Submission 45*, p. 2.

2.34 The AEC was seen by stakeholders to be the preferred service provider for conducting ballots of the community.³² A number of stakeholders from the Hawker region supported the use of the AEC to undertake any future ballot:

The best way to truly ascertain the community support is to hold the vote with the electoral commission, this would allow residents in the area to vote without fear of recourse while ensuring it is the actual community voting and not outsiders.³³

2.35 Stakeholders from Kimba shared their experiences of the AEC run community sentiment vote to move to Phase 2. According to Mrs Heather Baldock:

The vote to move to Phase 2 was arranged by the Kimba District Council at the request of Kimba people. The District Council extensively advertised the opportunity for locals who had vested interests and not enrolled to vote in Kimba council elections to apply to be included on the 'CEO's roll'.³⁴

2.36 Councillor Dean Johnson explained the reasoning behind engaging the AEC under the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999*:

What council has endeavoured to do by using an act and those guidelines is to make that not subjective, so it's not our call and it's not the department's call. People can't influence where that is. It may not be perfect, but it's a very good start, and no-one can influence who's in and who's out.³⁵

2.37 Mrs Donna Johnson commented that in the case of Kimba:

...the Australian Electoral Commission poll provided surety, independence and an indisputable final result. I support the AEC vote and that process as a whole; it was beyond reproach. It should now be the gold standard for a strong robust and independent process used for future votes.³⁶

2.38 As noted above, the local councils in both communities with nominated sites have requested that the AEC conduct a community sentiment vote.

2.39 Mr Bruce Wilson from DIIS explained why the boundary for the vote differs between the two communities:

...there is a difference in the boundary definition between the two communities. The Kimba community is being balloted on the basis of the Kimba District Council local electoral boundary and that was developed after early discussions with both the Kimba District Council and the community there. There are clearly people in those communities with a different view but it was considered that to be a relatively good reflection of the Kimba community and what holds it together.

32 See, for example, Regional Development Far North, *Submission 41*.

33 Hawker Community Development Board, *Submission 47*, [p. 1].

34 Heather Baldock, *Submission 64*, [p. 1].

35 Councillor Dean Johnson, District Council of Kimba, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2018, p. 3.

36 Donna Johnson, *Submission 27*, [p. 1].

For Wallabadina, because the boundary between the Flinders Ranges Council and the Outback Community Authority effectively runs through the property, we've adopted the Flinders Ranges Council electoral boundary plus a 50-kilometre radius north of that into the Outback Community Authority. The Outback Community Authority does pose a different challenge in that it isn't a local government; it's an authority under the state government. It doesn't have an electoral roll and an electoral boundary so we had to draw an arc, as it were, of 50 kilometres. We've had that discussion with the Outback Community Authority and we've had that discussion with community members. Again, not everyone's happy but the majority of people see this as a reasonable reflection of their communities.³⁷

2.40 The Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association, both in a supplementary submission and at the hearing in Hawker, demanded that all of the traditional owners of the site near Hawker be included in the final community sentiment vote, not just those traditional owners that live within the council area or within 50 km of the proposed site.

We mightn't have native title in all parts of our land, but this is our land. There are over 2,000 of us. There are some that don't live in the 50-kilometre radius or whatever you see. However, it's still Adnyamathanha land that they're talking about, and Adnyamathanha people live in all parts of our land. You just can't limit Adnyamathanha people to just the few Adnyamathanha people who live in this area. It's got to incorporate and capture all Adnyamathanha people.³⁸

2.41 While the Wallerberdina site is not an Aboriginal site nominated by an Indigenous Land Council, it is worth noting Section 5 of Part 2 of the Act, states that there should be consultation with the relevant Indigenous communities:

(iv) any Aboriginal community or group that may be affected by the proposed nomination has been consulted and has had adequate opportunity to express its view to the Land Council [nominator].

2.42 Indigenous consultation around the site selection process is considered in detail in the next chapter.

Committee view

2.43 The committee appreciates that it is difficult for some residents and affected stakeholders to understand how the Minister can make a decision without having a definitive threshold or objective method by which community sentiment is assessed. That said, the community sentiment vote is only one contributing factor to assessing community support with additional information being sought from neighbours, community groups, council, businesses and traditional owners.

37 Bruce Wilson, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Committee Hansard*, 2 August 2018, p. 28.

38 Tony Clark, Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2018, p. 43.

2.44 The committee also appreciates that in some instances it is important for a Minister to have some discretion. Given the variety of factors involved in making a decision to select a preferred site (including, but not limited to, technical factors, cost of establishment and community support), it would appear appropriate to not impose a threshold level of support for the community vote to meet in order for a site to be selected as a preferred site.

2.45 That said, the committee recognises that the Minister has publicly stated that he will not impose a NRWFM on an unwilling community. Given this statement and that the question put will directly ask if the voter supports the siting of a NRWFM in their local area, a case can be made for ruling out any community where a majority of support is not achieved.

2.46 The committee welcomes the engagement of the AEC to conduct the community sentiment vote from 20 August 2018 and encourages all eligible voters to participate.

Wider community views

2.47 DIIS stated that it has consulted members of the public beyond the nominating communities. For example, DIIS representatives have presented to audiences outside the nominating communities, including in Port Augusta and the Eyre Peninsula. In addition, DIIS has engaged through regional and state-based radio and print media communication to promote information and feedback on the project. Information is also available on the dedicated website and further engagement opportunities are available through social media.³⁹

2.48 Interested stakeholders from all over Australia were afforded an opportunity to make a submission to DIIS through the consultation process. DIIS highlighted that:

...the consultation process is open to all members of the public. The department does not exclude submissions from consideration by the Minister, based on where the person lives. For example, as part of the Kimba consultation process, 396 written submissions were received. Of these, 68 per cent were in the form of a form letter, and 71 per cent were from outside the local community.⁴⁰

Stakeholder views

2.49 Those stakeholders supportive of the NRWFM generally considered that the views of those most affected—direct neighbours and the local community—should be given relative importance in the selection process.⁴¹

2.50 For example, the Hawker Community Development Board submitted that:

At the end of the day the only people that will be truly affected by the repository going ahead or not is those local to the areas in question...

39 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Submission 40*, pp. 15–16.

40 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Submission 40*, p. 16.

41 See, for example, Donna Johnson, *Submission 27*; and Melanie Orman, *Submission 77*.

People in other areas will also not see their employment levels change, new residents moving into bringing families, more school teachers employed, and more hospital staff and so on. We are the ones that have looked at the potential benefits and negativity that the proposal brings and have chosen to support the proposal.⁴²

2.51 Some stakeholders were concerned that the wider community may not be as fully informed compared to residents in close proximity to the nominated sites. Mrs Robyn Stewart contended that:

Taking it to the wider community, who have not had the same level of education and opportunity to garner information as we have, by way of community meetings, visiting experts onsite at the department office, etc. I feel that it would result in an emotive vote rather than an informed choice.⁴³

2.52 This was supported by Councillor Dean Johnson:

We have had many, many experts from both sides of the debate in our community. I don't see that same knowledge and recognition from those outside of our district...I don't think it's fair now to cast the net wider without having all of that information available to everyone.⁴⁴

2.53 Indeed, Mr Brett Rayner, one of the nominating landholders in Kimba, indicated that he had changed his position through the process:

To start with I was probably, I guess like a lot of people, scared of the work nuclear. Then through different things, and my own research, I've realised that maybe this is something we can have a better look at and I've learnt a lot more along the way.⁴⁵

2.54 In contrast, those stakeholders opposed to the NRWMF generally considered that the views of the wider community should be taken into account.

2.55 Concerns were raised by stakeholders on the Eyre Peninsula that the 'green' reputation of the region's agricultural production could be questioned by the proximity of the NRWMF.⁴⁶ For example, Mr Cameron Scott highlighted that:

The Eyre Peninsula is a very unique farming area that is separated from the rest of the state. All grain from Eyre Peninsula [EP] is delivered, blended and exported out of Lower Eyre Peninsula. Therefor Kimba's grain is mixed with every other town's grain on EP, the affect that this could have on our exports hasn't been taken into consideration at all.⁴⁷

2.56 Ms Michele Madigan outlined how this might play out:

42 Hawker Community Development Board, *Submission 47*, [p. 2].

43 Robyn Stewart, *Submission 10*, [p. 1].

44 Councillor Dean Johnson, District Council of Kimba, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2018, p. 2.

45 Brett Rayner, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2018, p. 9.

46 See, for example, Janet Tiller, *Submission 9*.

47 Cameron Scott, *Submission 18*, [p. 2].

...competition between grain farmers for international markets is so intense that the warning from the relevant professional marketing company is clear: proximity to a nuclear waste dump will have predictably disastrous negative effects.⁴⁸

2.57 However, Mr Andrew Baldock contended that the buffer zone around the facility could be used to provide transparency to the market that agricultural production next to the NRWMF did not contain elevated levels of radiation:

I guess one of the main opportunities we see is a 100-hectare parcel of land. They've indicated there'll be 40 hectares required inside of that, so it'll leave a remaining 60-hectare buffer zone around that. We've approached them to see whether it would be possible if the [agricultural] community could utilise that 60-hectare buffer zone to grow crops or undertake trials within that area and to have that produce independently tested...So we can say, 'This produce has been grown within that area and has no elevated levels of radiation,' just to alleviate any concerns within the market and also to help generate income for research and development locally and the partnerships that may be able to be formed with ANSTO and their team of scientists and researchers.⁴⁹

2.58 Mr Jeff Baldock provided examples of agricultural production co-existing with activities involving radioactive and other hazardous material:

...in our state the likes of Thevenard, where the wheat from that area goes off the same belt as what their radioactive sands do; Port Adelaide, where the uranium gets shipped out of, is the same place as where our wheat gets shipped out of; and Pirie—it's a bit of a different issue in a way, I guess—which has an actual issue with the lead over there, but they tend to blend their grain from there, and that's never been an issue for anyone selling for export.⁵⁰

2.59 Indeed, Mr Bruce Wilson noted that DIIS did not have concerns about the potential impact on agricultural produce:

Food Standards Australia assure us that, with the regulatory frameworks, in their view there won't be any risk to market access for Australia and nor has there ever been any recorded history of market access issues due to radiation concerns. The Department of Agriculture has given similar assurances around licensing and export controls.⁵¹

2.60 Concerns about the potential effect on the tourism industry, particularly in Hawker, were forthcoming. Mr Greg Bannon highlighted the uncertain impact on tourism:

48 Michele Madigan, *Submission 26*, p. 2.

49 Andrew Baldock, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2018, p. 10.

50 Jeff Baldock, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2018, p. 32.

51 Bruce Wilson, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Committee Hansard*, 2 August 2018, p. 28.

The Flinders Ranges are noted as being one of the 10 best tourist destinations in the world. It might be a matter of perception, but nobody can say how it's going to affect our tourism.⁵²

2.61 That said, Dr Susan Andersson quantified the effect of a hypothetical drop in tourist numbers:

And if there is a two per cent drop in tourism in the Flinders Ranges, with an annual expenditure of \$425 million and 1900 direct jobs in tourism, a two per cent decrease from the reputational risk in tourism would lose 38 jobs. A five per cent decrease would lose 95 jobs. I'm not saying it would be a 50 per cent decrease, but just two per cent decrease would lose \$8.5 million in tourism income in just one year. That makes the \$10 million and possibly 45 jobs [from a NRWMF] much less attractive.⁵³

2.62 The contrary view was also posed. Mr Malcolm McKenzie noted that uranium mining had not impacted tourism around the Beverley Mine in the northern Flinders Ranges:

Arkaroola is up there, right next to the Beverley Mine. Has that tourism thing been shut down? I don't think so. There are thousands of tourists who go to Arkaroola.⁵⁴

2.63 Mr Bruce Wilson discussed international examples where agriculture and tourism have not been affected by close proximity to a NRWMF:

We also brought out some French farmers who live around the French facility in Aube and they talked about their experience in growing champagne and raising cows, and the dairy products, including cheese-making...They've never had any market issues and never had any price issues and never had any tourism issues. That's been replicated in the UK with the facility in the Lake District. There's farming up to that facility. The El Cabril facility is in a national park. The Lake District is in a World Heritage area. We have looked everywhere and we cannot find any evidence at all to support the concerns.⁵⁵

Committee view

2.64 The committee respects that all Australians may have an interest in where and how Australia's nuclear waste is disposed. Further, these stakeholders should have an opportunity to have their views recorded and considered. That said, the committee appreciates that DIIS has concentrated its efforts to inform stakeholders in the affected communities while still allowing submissions to be received from the wider community for consideration by the Minister.

52 Greg Bannon, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2018, p. 29.

53 Dr Susan Andersson, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2018, p. 29.

54 Malcolm McKenzie, *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2018, p. 14.

55 Bruce Wilson, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Committee Hansard*, 2 August 2018, p. 29.

2.65 The committee acknowledges the concerns from various stakeholders regarding potential perception issues for agricultural produce and the tourism industry. However, the committee considers that these concerns are unfounded given the relatively low-level of radioactivity of the material to be disposed of at a NRWMF and the robust regulatory safeguards to ensure the safe handling and transportation of this material.

2.66 If a NRWMF were to be sited in an agricultural region, the committee sees value in the DIIS working with local stakeholders so that part of the remaining 60 hectare buffer zone can be used to grow and test agricultural produce in order to reassure the community and agricultural markets that the produce from the surrounding region does not contain excessive amounts of radiation and is safe for consumption.

Recommendation 1

2.67 If a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility were to be sited in an agricultural region, the committee recommends that the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science work with local stakeholders, so that part of the remaining 60 hectare buffer zone can be used to grow and test agricultural produce, in order to reassure the community and agricultural markets that the produce from the surrounding region does not contain excessive amounts of radiation and is safe for consumption.