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Secretary  
Senate ECITA References Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra/ACT. 2600

Dear Secretary,

**Re: Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Environmental Regulation of Uranium Mining**

In June 2002, it was announced that your Committee had been required to inquire into and report on the regulatory, monitoring and reporting regimes that govern environmental performance of uranium extracting operations both at the Ranger and Jabiluka sites in the Northern Territory and at the Beverley and Honeymoon in-situ leaching (ISL) sites in South Australia. This is a welcome move by the Australian Senate as there is an urgent need for a comprehensive and independent examination of the uranium industry.

Our country has had a long involvement in the nuclear industry and, despite falling uranium prices and rising environmental impacts caused by uranium mining, continues to actively support and promote this industry. It has allowed mining on lands adjacent to World Heritage areas and has even approved controversial mining techniques, such as the in-situ leaching method, despite their known deleterious effects on the natural environment. I cannot understand how pumping mining waste contaminated with sulphuric acid back into the underground aquifers, as is practised at the Beverley or Honeymoon mine sites, can ever been considered an environmentally safe method, even under the most stringent conditions.

So far, there have been 110 documented environmental breaches at the Ranger site, with one of the incidents exceeding the reporting standard for uranium levels in Kakadu National Park by up to 70 times. At the Beverley mining site, there have already been four significant leaks in this year alone.

I would therefore urge that your Committee includes in its report to the Senate the following recommendations and/or demands :

**a) with respect to the Beverley and Honeymoon ISL mines :**

- The Federal and South Australian Governments must commit to the protection of groundwater; this must include an absolute prohibition of discharge of mining waste or leaks of any kind into the underground aquifers.
- The mine operators must be required to rehabilitate the impacts that their operations has already caused to the groundwater.
- There must be increased monitoring of mining operations and public reporting of all radioactive leaks.
- There must be a new public environmental assessment of the management of mining wastes.

**b) with respect to the Kakadu mines :**

- The Federal and Northern Territory Governments must be required to facilitate the rehabilitation, lease relinquishment and incorporation of the Jabiluka and Koongarra mineral leases into Kakadu National Park.
- The Federal and Northern Territory Governments must also be required to act to reduce the present environmental impacts of the Ranger uranium mining operations. For this to be achieved, the reporting and regulatory regimes must be strengthened by increasing the monitoring scope, the sensitivity of the trigger points and the number of event types for which reporting is necessary.
- The Rio Tinto Corporation and the relevant government agencies must be mandated to develop and support a phase-out, exit and rehabilitation strategy for the Ranger mine; this must include a plan to establish a viable Aboriginal economy independent of mining.
- There must be a credible action plan to prevent the further development of the Jabiluka mine site in order to protect the region's World Heritage property and values. The plan must specify clear and unambiguous processes for the rehabilitation of the site and its incorporation into Kakadu National Park.

I congratulate your Committee for undertaking such an inquiry and look forward to hearing the outcome of its deliberations on this important and vital subject.

Yours sincerely,



Michel Beuchat