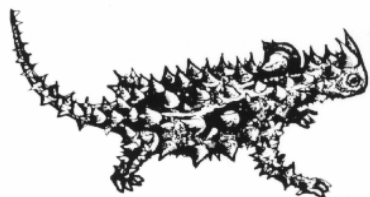


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**The Secretary
Senate Economics Committee
Parliament House
Canberra**

Submission to Inquiry into the Uranium Royalty (Northern Territory) Bill 2008

The Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) based in Alice Springs is the peak regional environment organisation servicing Central Australia. ALEC has operated in the region for over 28 years working with the local community, government and business sectors on a range of local and regional environmental issues.

ALEC appreciates the opportunity to submit its concerns regarding the proposed Uranium Royalty (Northern Territory) Bill 2008.

ALEC considers uranium mining and the wider nuclear industry to be unsustainable due to a number of unresolved issues:

- contamination of uranium mining sites and inadequate tailings management
- nuclear weapons proliferation and;
- long term radioactive waste management

The proposed Uranium Royalty (Northern Territory) Bill 2008 provides certainty for the uranium mining industry but fails to provide any certainty for Indigenous Traditional Owners and communities. The proposed Uranium Royalty (Northern Territory) Bill 2008 is fundamentally flawed due to the recommendation of a profit-based royalty system. This exposes some of Australia's most vulnerable people to the volatility of the uranium market which has seen major price fluctuations in the past 10 years.

A profit-based system provides certainty and flexibility for industry but fails to provide any meaningful security for Indigenous communities. Where projects are initiated, the risks of local soil and water contamination exist while there is no certainty that Aboriginal communities will gain any monetary benefit unless the project is profitable.

It is unacceptable to shift the health, social and environmental risks to vulnerable Indigenous communities while granting certainty to multinational mining companies.

The proposed Uranium Royalty (Northern Territory) Bill 2008 is unacceptable in these times of economic uncertainty. There needs to be more certainty and security for Indigenous communities and less reliance on multinational mining companies to deliver economic outcomes for Indigenous communities. The Commonwealth must ensure that environmental bonds and the costs of

rehabilitation are borne by the company and not the Australian taxpayer. The risks of local, site-specific contamination, nuclear weapon proliferation and larger stockpiles of radioactive waste are increased with every uranium mine that comes online. In the current economic climate, it is unacceptable to shift the risks associated with uranium mining to Indigenous communities and more broadly the Australian public. The costs of long-term environmental protection and radioactive rehabilitation (~10 000 years) should be borne by the nuclear industry and surety be established prior to the commencement of any nuclear action.

James Cocking
Coordinator
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