

To: The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science

Attn: National Radioactive Waste Section

Email: radioactivewaste@industry.gov.au

Re: The proposed National Radioactive Waste Management Facility

I am writing to alert you of my grave concerns about the proposal to build a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility at:

1. Sallys Flat - New South Wales, 2641 Hill End Road, Hill End
2. Hale - Northern Territory, Lot 1933 Old South Road, Hale
3. Cortlinye - South Australia, 2051 Buckleboo Hundred Line Road, Cortlinye
4. Pinkawillinie - South Australia, 762 Peella Road, Pinkawillinie
5. Barndioota - South Australia, 377 Wallerberdina Road, Barndioota
6. Oman Ama - Queensland, Cunningham Highway, Gore

I believe the process used to select these sites is highly-flawed and undemocratic. I do not believe that the serious matter of handling Australia's national nuclear waste should be put down to a commercial, profit-driven process where local land-owners are offered bonanza land prices to sell land for the facility while surrounding community members are left to respond. This is not the science based, rational process behaving a matter of such significant national concern.

While are communities are told of \$10million benefit they will receive for accepting the facility, no plan for the 400 year management required for this facility has been offered. Problematic is the fact that intermediate-level waste needs to be managed for thousands, not hundreds, of years. Indeed, a major flaw of this plan is the lack of disclosure around what is to be housed in the facility and how. The government has been referring to the facility as a low-level waste store when in fact it will serve indefinitely as a facility for intermediate level waste, including reprocessed reactor fuel.

It is also clear that messaging that this facility is necessary for Australia to continue to have nuclear medicine is propaganda, not fact. Professional health associations such as the Public Health Association of Australia and the Medical Association for the Prevention of War clearly dispute this.

Each region with a nominated site has significant social, environmental and economic concerns about the proposal. Some of these are listed below.

- **Process:** A de-facto confidential commercial tendering process where an individual is set to make a profit and the surrounding community is left to respond:
 - ⇒ Failure to disclose how community sentiment will be assessed or weighted
 - ⇒ Failure to define community or stakeholder
 - ⇒ Divisive tactics and now proven to cause serious social disharmony and division.
 - ⇒ Imbalance of power in messaging: Failure to provide non-biased discussion of issues.
 - ⇒ Potential for coercion in offering of funding for communities and community groups
 - ⇒ False messaging of need for site for nuclear medicine
 - ⇒ Frequent misleading messaging of site being mainly for medical waste
- **Remoteness and location of sites:** Transportation of nuclear waste over long distances to reach several of the sites raises serious concerns about the expertise to deal with the waste and potential accidents and contamination along the route.
- **Livelihood:** Operation of a waste facility could spoil many of the regions' reputations as tourist destinations, agricultural areas and pastoral lands for domestic use and export

- **Cultural significance of sites:** Failure to acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the Traditional Owners of this country and that Aboriginal heritage for each site needs to be considered even if this is not required under legislation.
- **Health and wellbeing:** The division in some communities that is affecting people's mental health and the cohesion of the town. Offering funding for infrastructure upgrades in exchange for hosting of nuclear waste is not acceptable.
- **Water contamination:** A radioactive facility poses a potential threat of contamination to ground water used by humans and livestock. Many areas in Australia depend heavily on groundwater for basic survival and these precious resources should not be put at risk.
- **Escalating risk:** Concern that an approved national waste dump may provide an opening for the storage of higher-grade waste. This is particularly of concern in South Australia due to the Royal Commission examining the costs and benefits of international high-level waste storage and recommending in the Tentative Findings that it go ahead. Current government assurances cannot be trusted as future governments have the power to change the rules.

Recommendation:

I support the communities of the 6 nominated sites in believing that the best option would be to scrap all of these six sites and halt the current National Radioactive Waste Management Project. An independent inquiry should be held to look at all the ways this material could be managed.

Australia needs a comprehensive, long-term radioactive waste management plan. This should include an inventory of current waste including waste expected to re-enter Australia, all the options for locating and managing current and future stockpiles, as well as a plan to stop making more.

I call on you to immediately stop the process aimed at siting a National Radioactive Waste Facility at any of the nominated sites. It is time for the government to take stock of its nuclear waste and to develop a long-term management plan for low and intermediate waste which involves responsible, democratic and community-centred stewardship of this waste for the hundreds, indeed thousands, of years it will need to be safeguarded.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding my submission.

Thank you.

Signed: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____

Email address: _____