

Say no to radioactive waste in Kimba

The federal government is trying to change Australia's radioactive waste laws. They're pushing for an unnecessary national radioactive waste site near Kimba in regional South Australia. This is contested by Barnjarla Traditional Owners and many in the regional community.

Concerns with the Kimba site

- **Unnecessary** There is no compelling case for a new radioactive waste facility. Australia's worst radioactive waste should remain in existing secured facilities at Lucas Heights in NSW until a credible management plan has been agreed.
- **Unfair** Decision-making has been unclear and restricted. Traditional Owner, community and regional objections have been ignored. State, federal and human rights laws have been undermined. We need greater transparency, community oversight and, above all, respect for Traditional Owners.
- **Untested** Ongoing radioactive waste management solutions must be assessed by scientific experts who are independent of government. This waste lasts a long time and decisions should not be rushed.
- **Unsafe** Radioactive waste management is a serious national concern that will impact our community and country for generations to come. Transporting and double-handling radioactive waste across thousands of kilometres opens the door for environmental damage, nuclear transport and terrorism risks, and community health impacts.

NRWMA Act proposal

In January 2020, the federal government announced its intention to build a new site to dump and store radioactive waste in Kimba. The proposal is governed by the National Radioactive Waste Management Act (NRWMA) — a law passed in 2012.

The federal government want to amend this law to confirm Kimba as the waste location, and remove the right to any future legal challenge. The NRWMA proposal is to transport hazardous nuclear waste, primarily from secure facilities at Lucas Heights in NSW to Kimba, 1,700km away on the Eyre Peninsula.

Waste at Kimba would include:

- Low-level waste (LLW), which would be disposed of at Kimba.
- Long-lived intermediate-level waste (ILW), which would be stored in above-ground 'interim' storage until a permanent deep geological solution can be built somewhere else. It is important to note no funding has been allocated or other progress made on a permanent solution, so the 'interim' store could be in place for many decades.

Waste at Kimba would not include:

- Uranium mine tailings waste. These are managed on-site at mines.
- Waste from hospitals or medical clinics, these are also managed on-site based on a principle called 'delay and decay'.



Getting the facts straight

The proposed national waste facility at Kimba is not required to ensure Australians have secure access to nuclear medicine.

Australia's radioactive waste

“Waste can be safely stored at Lucas Heights for decades to come.”

– ARPANSA's CEO to Senate Inquiry, June 2020

Currently more than 90% of Australia's radioactive waste comes from nuclear reactors managed by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) in Lucas Heights, NSW. This waste is stored on-site, including in a dedicated Interim Waste Store (IWS) facility that is monitored 24/7 by Australian Federal Police.

Commissioned in 2015, the Lucas Heights IWS storage is safety rated until 2055. Australia's federal nuclear regulator, the Australian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), has identified Lucas Heights as a credible and feasible extended interim storage option for Australia's ILW radioactive waste. This view on ANSTO's capacity has previously been supported by both ANSTO and the Australian Nuclear Association.

ARPANSA recently told the federal government it “is aware that some stakeholders have interpreted ARPANSA's decisions regarding the IWS as a requirement for relocation of the waste stored in the IWS, even suggesting that there is an urgent need for relocation. This is not correct. ARPANSA has not raised safety concerns regarding storage of waste at the IWS.”

100% of Barngarla voters rejected the proposal 

Unfair and unjust: NRWMA undermines Indigenous human rights

“It appears the right of Indigenous peoples to influence the outcome of decision-making processes affecting them may not be sufficiently protected by this bill.”

– Joint Committee on Human Rights, April 2020

The NRWMA has ignored both important democratic protections and clear objections from the region's Traditional Owners, the Barngarla people.

A 2020 report by the federal parliament's multi-party Joint Committee on Human Rights found that the NRWMA Act poses a risk to Indigenous culture and self-determination under international human rights law. Two non-binding independent ballots were conducted to gauge community support for the proposal. One was paid for by the federal government and involved ratepayers in the local government area. After being excluded from participation in the government ballot the Barngarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation engaged an external company to poll its members.

The NRWMA systematically disempowers local communities and Traditional Owners, and weakens environmental protections. It nullifies and curtails critical state, territory and federal laws, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984, the Native Title Act 1993 and Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

It is in clear conflict with the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Article 29) which requires: States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of Indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

Time for a fresh approach

Radioactive waste is highly hazardous and will impact our country and communities for generations to come. The NRW project has already cut corners in community consultation. We cannot risk more rushed policy decisions about radioactive waste.

Peak Australian health, environment and community organisations have joined together to call for a new and more inclusive and evidence-based approach. Trust, transparency and good processes are urgently needed in this debate.

The best way to advance responsible radioactive waste management in Australia is to halt the flawed Kimba plan in favour of an expert independent review based on evidence and global best practice. Radioactive waste lasts longer than any politician, we must get this right.

Take action

- Write to Resource Minister Keith Pitt. Let them know you don't support the flawed Kimba plan https://www.acf.org.au/open_letter_radioactive_waste

Learn more

- <https://www.nodumpalliance.org.au/>
- https://www.acf.org.au/nuclear_free
- www.nuclear.foe.org.au/waste
- <https://vimeo.com/442068242>
- <https://vimeo.com/382855709>



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Below. No nuclear waste dump protest, Port Augusta.

