

## LOUD AND CLEAR: *SA opposition to an international nuclear dump*

***The SA Premier insists that we must progress the nuclear waste discussion, citing the economic claims from the Royal Commission report, and community support. Neither of these arguments stack up.***

***December 2016***

### COMMUNITY VOICES

Since the announcement of a Royal Commission into South Australia's involvement in the Nuclear Fuel Cycle, individuals and groups have voiced opposition to the plan. The No Dump Alliance formed in May 2016 as a broad cross-section of South Australian civil society, including Indigenous, public health, trade union, faith and environment groups and academics to oppose proposals to open South Australia up to international high-level nuclear waste importation and dumping<sup>1</sup>. Conservation SA is an active Alliance member.

**'Why does the government keep bringing back nuclear issues when we know the problems last forever?'**

Yami Lester, No Dump Alliance Ambassador

#### 1. Statewide consultation - the *Community Views Report*<sup>2</sup>

The Premier has claimed that the *Community Views Report* shows there is public support for further investigation of the dump. However, he has cherry-picked one sub-category of responses to back up his claim. The full results from all participants show only 36% support continuing the conversation. Only 31% of respondents supported Australia taking other countries' waste. For Aboriginal communities this was only 21%.

The report<sup>3</sup> indicates that those more likely to be supportive were motivated primarily by belief the project would bring economic benefits or jobs. If these claims are overblown, then it's likely that even these low levels of community support have been greatly overestimated.

#### 2. Polls and surveys

Since the Royal Commission was announced, there has been a consistent pattern of only 1/3 community support in SA for a nuclear dump across a range of polls and surveys, eg 31% in the November 2016 Community Views report<sup>4</sup> and 35% in the Nov 2016 Sunday Mail Your SA survey<sup>5</sup>. (The latter also showed a drop in support for the nuclear industry overall from the previous year.)

The only significant outliers are 2 Galaxy polls commissioned by *The Advertiser* in Feb<sup>6</sup> and Sept 2016<sup>7</sup> that heavily emphasised disputed economic claims:

***'The Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission has proposed that SA has a high-level waste repository for spent nuclear fuel that would generate estimated revenue, through a State Wealth Fund, of \$445 billion. Based on what you have seen or heard, are you in favour or opposed to this waste repository being located in SA?'***

These showed that support remained unchanged (at 48-49%), even despite the government's expensive *Know Nuclear* state-wide PR campaign.

#### 3. Citizens' Jury verdict

On 6 November, after weeks of exposure to information from a range of sources followed by intense deliberation, 70% of the jury of 350 South Australians said that ***under no circumstances*** should SA pursue the waste dump plan.

**'The jury generally had a strong conviction in taking a position. Two-thirds of the jury do not wish to pursue the opportunity under any circumstances.'**<sup>8</sup>  
The Citizens' Jury report, Nov 2016

#### 4. National Day of Action Against Nuclear Waste Dumps

On October 15, over 3,000 people turned up in Adelaide to rally against both the national and international nuclear waste dump proposals. This was one of the largest rallies held in Adelaide in recent years, and support rallies were also held around the country.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.nodumpalliance.org.au](http://www.nodumpalliance.org.au)

<sup>2</sup> <http://assets.yoursay.sa.gov.au/production/2016/11/11/09/37/34/0c1d5954-9f04-4e50-9d95-ca3bfb7d1227/NFCRC%20CARA%20Community%20Views%20Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See p 18 at <http://assets.yoursay.sa.gov.au/production/2016/11/11/09/37/34/0c1d5954-9f04-4e50-9d95-ca3bfb7d1227/NFCRC%20CARA%20Community%20Views%20Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://assets.yoursay.sa.gov.au/production/2016/11/11/09/37/34/0c1d5954-9f04-4e50-9d95-ca3bfb7d1227/NFCRC%20CARA%20Community%20Views%20Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Sunday Mail Your Say, SA survey

<sup>6</sup> Advertiser/Galaxy poll

<sup>7</sup> Advertiser/Galaxy poll

<sup>8</sup> <http://assets.yoursay.sa.gov.au/production/2016/11/06/07/20/56/26b5d85c-5e33-48a9-8eea-4c860386024f/final%20jury%20report.pdf>

## 5. Quality of Life report<sup>9</sup>

A report prepared for the Citizens' Jury by community leaders of the Aboriginal human services sector in SA stated:

**'The government wants us to have a conversation about nuclear. As Aboriginal community leaders and NGO service providers, we say "NO" to this proposal... We want the government to understand that we want a different conversation; one that focuses on unfinished business, including our experience of Maralinga; on the sickness that it created in our people and in the land; and the pain and loss that it caused...'**

## 6. Petition

On 11 November, Premier Weatherill was handed postcards and petitions signed by 35,000 people opposing the nuclear waste dump. The Premier has not made any public comment about this very significant expression of community opinion that does not support the dump proposal or any further investigation of it.

## 7. Loss of political and institutional support

The Liberal party has withdrawn its support for this proposal, citing the lack of community support and the large economic risk to SA that the project presents.

**'I have much greater ambition for SA than becoming the world's nuclear dump.'**<sup>10</sup>

**SA Liberal Party leader Mr Steven Marshall**

The Greens and Nick Xenophon Team are also opposed to progressing this proposal, so it currently has no prospect of achieving the broad political support across all levels of government it would need to proceed.

An overwhelming number of Traditional Owner groups in SA strongly oppose this plan. Union and Church groups have also expressed opposition, while Business SA has described the proposal as 'dead'.<sup>11</sup>

## ECONOMICS

The Royal Commission based all of its findings of economic benefits on only one piece of modelling - by nuclear industry advocates<sup>12</sup> Jacobs MCM.

The modelling's highly optimistic or 'heroic' assumptions were heavily criticised by a number of prominent economists, who pointed out that more realistic assumptions could produce far less favourable outcomes.

As economist Professor Richard Blandy told members of the Citizens' Jury:

**'The forecast profitability of the proposed nuclear dump rests on highly optimistic assumptions... such a dump could easily lose money instead of being a bonanza.'**<sup>13</sup>

The SA Parliamentary Joint Committee inquiring into the findings of the Royal Commission subsequently released a thorough review of the Jacobs report. This review was far more comprehensive than any verification of the Jacobs figures sought by the Royal Commission. This is surprising, given the extensive powers and budget of the Royal Commission.

## Nuclear Economics Consulting Group (NECG) Review of Jacobs MCM Report<sup>14</sup>

This review was reported in the media as endorsing the Jacobs revenue figure of \$257 billion for SA.

### It did nothing of the sort.

The NECG report's authors are seasoned global nuclear industry players who have an interest in the expansion of the industry and recognise that an international waste repository would benefit the industry and some nuclear countries.

They point out that 'overly optimistic' assumptions used by Jacobs could put the project's profitability 'seriously at risk'. They say that issues not adequately explored in the Jacobs report have 'significant serious potential to adversely impact the Project and its commercial outcomes'. The authors state that 'the potential for delays and/or cost increases in the Project is significant' and that considerable work is needed just to 'develop

<sup>9</sup> <http://assets.yoursay.sa.gov.au/production/2016/11/04/05/55/12/af0cea02-09d1-4788-bfca-8a9942d0973d/Quality%20of%20Life%20Report.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-11/opposition-says-it-will-vote-against-sa-nuclear-waste-dump/8016818>

<sup>11</sup> <http://indaily.com.au/news/local/2016/11/11/dumped-nuclear-repository-dead-as-marshall-draws-election-battleline/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-03/radioactive-waste-dump-would-boost-sa-economy-commission-hears/7991170>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-03/radioactive-waste-dump-would-boost-sa-economy-commission-hears/7991170>

<sup>14</sup> The review is available at <http://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/Committees/Pages/Committees.aspx?CTId=2&CId=333>

a credible value proposition’.

The authors question the inclusion of some potential client countries, the project’s timing, the likely return from the Reserve Fund, the size and complexity of the proposed infrastructure, and believe that four important risks are understated:

- 1. delays and cost increases (the potential is significant due to Australia’s limited experience)
- 2. the complexity of accepting a large variety of waste types and containers from multiple countries (which could require additional facilities, increase costs and cause delays)
- 3. reputational risk (the risk to other industries was not modelled) and
- 4. nuclear accident/incident (no analysis was done).

**WHAT WE CANNOT AFFORD**

South Australians have already spent millions investigating the proposal to import high level nuclear waste, with a Royal Commission followed by the biggest ‘community conversation’ in the state’s history. Costs to date:

Royal Commission	\$7.2 million <sup>15</sup>
Community engagement	\$8.2 million <sup>16</sup>
Total	\$15.4 million

All this expensive investigation revealed that even long time nuclear industry advocates (the authors of the Jacobs MCM report) were not able to make a credible business case for SA to take the world’s nuclear waste.

And ‘further investigations’ would dwarf what we have spent so far: credible estimates range from \$600 million to \$1 billion. Imagine what else could be done with such an investment.

We all agree that SA needs to secure a strong and diverse economic future - all South Australians want that.

*‘Every day we spend needlessly debating the option to turn ourselves into the world’s rubbish tip is one less day we have to crack on with creating jobs and turning our state around.’<sup>17</sup>*

Craig Wilkins, Chief Executive of Conservation SA.

It is time for South Australia’s leaders to lead that charge, and invest sensibly in the ventures that offer diverse economic and other benefits to our state. We cannot afford to waste more time and money on unpopular proposals that clearly don’t stack up.

**GLOBAL VOICES**

**‘For me personally, I would not want an international nuclear waste dump in my backyard, period! I hope Australians consider that very carefully.’<sup>18</sup>**

*Erin Brokovich, Environmental Campaigner*

**‘To South Australians, to all Australians, I say if you want to deal seriously with the issue of nuclear waste, let the Kurna and the other Indigenous groups make the decisions.’<sup>19</sup>**

*David Suzuki, Environmental Activist and Academic*

**‘We know the stories from the bomb. We know the history. We know the country, and it is crying for us. We will talk over and over and we won’t stop. For the kids and the land and for all the Kungka Tjuta that aren’t here. Everyone has to say no. Irati Wanti - the poison, leave it.’<sup>20</sup>**

*Emily Munyunga Austin, Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta*

**‘Why would we want to leave a legacy for our children’s, children’s children and beyond 100,000 years, that can never be taken away?’<sup>21</sup>**

*Scott Hicks, Hollywood Director*

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.premier.sa.gov.au/index.php/jay-weatherill-news-releases/495-nuclear-fuel-cycle-royal-commission-report-released>  
<sup>16</sup> p24 at <http://assets.yoursay.sa.gov.au/production/2016/11/15/04/14/54/d66e8e3d-fadf-4c6e-a5c4-e793f60abe1e/Government%20Response%20-%20NFCRC.pdf>  
<sup>17</sup> Advertiser, November 15, 2016  
<sup>18</sup> <http://indaily.com.au/news/2016/10/17/erin-brockovich-weighs-into-sas-nuclear-waste-debate/>  
<sup>19</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-13/david-suzuki-womadelaide-nuclear-waste-dump/7243068>  
<sup>20</sup> [www.nodumpalliance.org.au](http://www.nodumpalliance.org.au)  
<sup>21</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-15/nuclear-waste-dump-protesters-bring-the-fight-to-adelaide/7935954>

**‘This is not only an important issue for South Australia, but an issue for all of Australia. We don’t want to be known as the nuclear dumping ground for the world. It is totally unacceptable.’<sup>22</sup>**

*Tauto Sansbury, Narungga man and NAIDOC Lifetime Achiever Award recipient*

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<sup>22</sup> <https://vimeo.com/179321251>