

No Dump Alliance

www.nodumpalliance.org.au



Senate Standing Committees on Economics
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Phone: +61 2 6277 3540
economics.sen@aph.gov.au

No Dump Alliance submission into the appropriateness and thoroughness of the site selection process for a national radioactive waste storage facility

Introduction

The No Dump Alliance is a broad cross-section of South Australian civil society, including Indigenous, public health, trade union, faith and environment groups, academics and concerned individuals that formed in response to proposals to open South Australia up to international high-level nuclear waste importation and dumping. The Alliance also opposes the federal government's continued push to establish a national nuclear waste dump and store in regional SA. The No Dump Alliance supports local communities to voice their concerns, welcomes state government legislation that prohibits a nuclear waste dump in SA, and calls for a better process for the management of Australia's nuclear waste.

The No Dump Alliance welcomes this inquiry and the opportunity to contribute this submission. The Alliance also encourages the Committee to hold hearings in the regional areas of Hawker and Kimba to hear firsthand from the communities on the front line. The Alliance also welcomes hearings in Canberra to consider the views of national and state stakeholders and groups. This is a national project and is of national concern.

Spokespeople for the Alliance include Vivianne McKenzie from the Flinders Ranges and Peter Woolford, *No Radioactive Waste Dump on Agricultural Land in Kimba or SA President* and Jamie Newlyn from the MUA SA Branch.

The radioactive waste to be disposed and stored is both "low level" and "long lived intermediate level". The latter must be managed safely for many thousands of years and current best practice to realise this is by deep geological disposal.

No Dump Alliance members have been closely involved with the current federal waste plan and process and concluded that the site selection process for a national radioactive waste

storage facility at Kimba and Hawker in South Australia is flawed and neither appropriate nor thorough. We maintain that the current project should be discontinued.

The following specifically addresses the terms of reference.

a) the financial compensation offered to applicants for the acquisition of land under the Nominations of Land Guidelines;

We believe that inviting private landowners to nominate their land for financial gain far in excess of the land value is a non- scientific way to determine a location for a national radioactive waste facility. We also believe that a single party nomination model cannot be credible considered to represent a 'volunteer' process.

b) how the need for 'broad community support' has played and will continue to play a part in the process, including:

i) The definition of 'broad community support'

Since May 2015 the federal government and its DIIS representatives have consistently refused to define "broad community consent" in both public meetings and in writing. Members of our organisation have been told different definitions but none have been able to be confirmed in writing.

The figure 65% has been mentioned and we believe this figure was determined by the result in the flawed Orima telephone survey which purported to survey whether residents of the Flinders Ranges council district wished to proceed to Phase 2 of the site selection process.

A postal vote of Kimba council residents resulted in a 56.5% positive result to proceed to Phase 2, which is well short of the 65% previously mentioned. We reject the claim that this is broad community support, rather it is a sign of a much-divided community.

ii) How 'broad community support' has been or will be determined for each process advancement stage.

The NRWMF Community Sentiment Survey purported to survey whether residents of the Flinders Ranges council district (Hawker, Quorn and Cradock) wished to proceed to Phase 2 of the site selection process.

This telephone survey was incomplete and inadequate because it did not survey the entire population of the area and was biased because it only surveyed residents with landline telephones. The flawed survey only asked residents if they wanted to proceed to the evaluation of the site and not actually build a facility. Flinders Ranges council residents have not had an opportunity for a complete postal vote conducted by the AEC.

The Adnyamathanha people are the Traditional Owners of the Barndioota site and their representative body the Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA) has repeatedly expressed clear opposition. The No Dump Alliance believes that it is critical that

the views and position of the overwhelming majority of Traditional Owners are listened to and respected in relation to the appropriateness of a site.

A postal vote was held for the Kimba council region and resulted in a 56.6% positive result to proceed to Stage 2. This survey did not include the views of the Traditional Owners from the area who must be consulted and should have been consulted at the initial nomination.

We believe that both survey results were influenced strongly by the offer of \$2 million to be spent in the community, and that this was an intentional and deliberate inducement to sway the community opinion towards a positive result.

Despite seeking clarification, we have not been able to ascertain what the procedure and process will be to evaluate whether there is broad community consent should the government wish the project to proceed from Phase 3 to construction.

c) how any need for Indigenous support has played and will continue to play a part in the process, including how Indigenous support has been or will be determined for each process advancement stage;

The federal government has stated that no individual group will have a right of veto. The Citizen's Jury into the former Weatherill state government's international radioactive waste facility proposal found overwhelming support for the right of veto for Aboriginal people. Former Premier Weatherill wrote to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on 24 October 2017 outlining concerns about a national nuclear waste dump and store plan and recommending that local Aboriginal people should have the right of veto over any dump being built on their lands. The relevant quote from Mr Weatherill's letter is as follows:

"I recently met with Traditional Owners of the Adnyamathanha community who expressed deep concern about the proposed site at Hawker, and the potential impacts on Adnyamathanha Cultural Heritage"....." This engagement process was insightful and highlighted the need for a bigger conversation about how Aboriginal people want to be seen, valued and recognised and on 'unfinished businesses from the past. In particular, Aboriginal people's history with the nuclear industry demonstrates a need for significant healing. In recognition, the South Australian government committed to provide a local Aboriginal community with a final right of veto over any future facility proposed on their lands. I recommend that the Commonwealth Government now consider adopting a similar policy position as part of the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility process."

In the NRWMF community sentiments survey by Orima Research released in April 2016 it shows on page 60 of the report that 97% of Indigenous people opposed the facility at Barndioota.

The Orima report did not table any views of Indigenous people in relation to support for the project to continue.

The Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA), composed of 23 different organisations and interest groups released a statement in May 2016 opposing a nuclear waste facility.

Recently on March 24, 2018 the ATLA board reaffirmed opposition with the passing of this resolution:

“The Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association remains totally opposed to the nuclear waste dump at Wallerberdina

This is our land, our culture and we must have veto over this toxic waste being dumped in our country. Udneyus come and go but we will be here forever. We say NO to the waste dump, for our grandchildren and their grandchildren and many generations to come.”

In the 2016/2017 ATLA annual report stated: “The National Waste Dump continues to be an issue and ATLA remains totally opposed to the waste dump at Wallerberdina. ATLA has been treated very poorly in this whole process and it has been a real struggle to ensure our voice is heard.”

The No Dump Alliance understands that ATLA was not approached or engaged until the NRWMF project was into stage 2.

Surveys are not assessing the views of Adnyamathanha people who live outside the region; with a significant part of the community living in Port Augusta and Adelaide.

d) whether and/or how the Government’s ‘community benefit program’ payments affect broad community and Indigenous community sentiment;

We believe that the government has linked the project to the promises of jobs and community grants as an inducement to deliberately influence community consent. We believe this is intentional and deliberate, and designed to sway the community into returning a positive result towards the project.

There have been many discussions and assertions by local residents that they have decided to be in favour of the facility by the mere fact that the government says it will bring jobs and money. This is despite scant detail being provided by the project proponent about the employment and economic impacts of the planned facility.

e) whether wider (Eyre Peninsular or state-wide) community views should be taken into consideration and, if so, how this is occurring or should be occurring; and

The project has been framed by the government since its inception as a project where only local communities will be consulted.

Such an approach is untenable as this is a federal government initiative to develop a purpose built facility for the disposal and storage of Australia’s radioactive waste. This is a national issue that demands national attention and assessment. While it may be politically expedient, it is neither credible nor responsible for the federal government to treat this issue as a local government or community matter.

The community to be consulted for the Barndioota facility was originally designated at a 50km radius around the dump, which was then extended to include Quorn and the whole Flinders Ranges council.

The community to be consulted for the Kimba facility was designated as residents of the Kimba council on the electoral roll.

The construction of a facility could have a significant impact on the reputation of either community, with a detrimental impact on the tourism and farming industries upon which the communities depend.

f) any other related matters.

The radioactive waste facility is intended to dispose and store both “low-level” and “long-lived intermediate level” radioactive waste.

The facility is intended as an “interim” location for the “long-lived intermediate level” radioactive waste, as world’s best practice currently views deep geological disposal as the preferred management option. The waste would be stored above ground, as the current government does not have a site or a process to determine a site to build its final deep geological burial facility. There is a strong risk that the waste could become stranded and forgotten about should future governments fail to find the finances or political will to dispose of the waste deep underground.

Our members and colleagues have attended many of the federal government’s presentations and have found them biased and flawed towards focus on the “low-level” waste, and with no attention given to the extremely long-term risks involved in the storage of “long-lived intermediate level” radioactive waste.

The presentations have also failed to acknowledge any terrorism risks of creation of a “dirty bomb” from the “intermediate” waste.

We therefore believe that the residents who are in favour of the proposal have not been given full, complete and unbiased information to inform their decision.

A decision this serious to accept the so-called “interim” storage of “long-lived intermediate level” radioactive waste that has implications for the future security of South Australia and should not be solely or primarily made by the small community of people who currently reside in the districts of the Flinders Ranges and Kimba councils. Such an approach also deeply disenfranchises communities along the extensive transport corridors any such facility would require.

Conclusion

The members of the No Dump Alliance maintain that the site selection process for a national radioactive waste storage facility at Kimba and Hawker in South Australia is flawed, and neither appropriate nor thorough. We share the view held by many civil society groups

that the current project should be halted whilst a thorough national audit of radioactive waste is conducted with an independently assessed review of the range of options available to best manage Australia's waste. Our members and spokespeople continue to witness and seek to highlight the high level of stress and pressure this plan is causing in the communities of Hawker and Kimba. In December 2017 the No Dump Alliance supported a 'Don't Dump on SA' rally on the steps of Parliament House in Adelaide. Invited speakers made the following statements about support for the National Radioactive Waste Management Project:

"I was the member of parliament that tried to get the last dump on the road at Woomera. The Kimba experience has taught me a very great amount. Quite frankly, the government and ANSTO cannot be trusted with this job. They cannot be trusted with the management of nuclear waste." Barry Wakelin, former federal Liberal politician.

"Last year we voted as the Uniting Church in SA to stand in solidarity with the Adnyamathanha people in opposing the placing of a nuclear waste dump on their land. We are here today renewing our commitment to that solidarity and to join with you as fellow South Australians in this resolve." Dr Deidre Palmer, former moderator Uniting Church (SA)

"The Flinders Ranges is not the right place for any nuclear waste facility. The purported benefits of this dump, if realised, will equal only 1% of jobs in tourism and just 2% of one year of tourism income for the Flinders Ranges and outback. Any drop-in tourism will wipe out any possible economic benefit. Everyone, including the government and ANSTO (Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation), agree that the Flinders is not suitable for long term disposal of intermediate level waste, but that is where it will be stored until another site is proposed, accepted and built. This may take decades or centuries and may never happen. We are creating a toxic legacy for our children and grandchildren. Safeguards and legislation put in place today will be brushed aside when it's convenient for future governments. This can never be the right place to bring intermediate level waste." Dr Susi Andersson, Hawker resident and local GP.

"We stand with Traditional Owners of this land, we stand with the farmers of this land". Jamie Newlyn, Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia SA Branch and No Dump Alliance spokesperson.

"The Flinders Ranges is an iconic area, people come from all over the world to visit. I'm saddened to hear that the government wants to spoil this beautiful, pristine area with a devastating piece of junk. We certainly understand that there has to be somewhere they can store it, but you don't take a pristine area and destroy that. We ask that the state government stand with the Adnyamathanha community to stop this waste dump." Vince Coulthard, CEO of the Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association.