



NUCLEAR WASTE

A process not a postcode approach

Best possible management, community consent & waste minimisation.

Successive governments have failed to deliver a solution to managing radioactive waste while continuing to produce and indeed increase the production of waste. We have a responsibility to manage Australia's inventory of waste to the highest possible standards. The focus of finding a solution rather than just a location should begin with the Government upholding its commitment to community consent.

> NUCLEAR THE WRONG QUESTION

We have some major hurdles ahead of us on nuclear waste. We need to safely manage the existing nuclear waste accumulated across Australia. We need to consider waste minimisation strategies so that we are not locked into a never ending search for waste storage options. We must protect Australia against the growing threat of becoming the world's repository for the highest levels of nuclear waste known on earth.

Australia has a long history of failed plans to locate national nuclear waste dumps, plans that have disproportionately targeted Aboriginal land. Coercive attempts to dump radioactive waste on unwilling communities do not work. That is the experience here in Australia and internationally.

Instead of simply asking 'which remote location is most suitable for dumping radioactive waste' we should be asking what is the most appropriate way of managing and isolating various categories of nuclear waste and how can we minimise the production of nuclear waste.

> NATIONAL NUCLEAR WASTE

A long-term waste management solution needs to take a considered and evidence based approach. This would best be achieved by holding an independent Inquiry into national radioactive waste production and management, with input from civil society stakeholders as well as people with expertise in engineering, social science, environmental science, community consultation, radiation and medicine. Contributors should hold no conflicts of interest by joining the Inquiry as panel members or witnesses.

An Inquiry would include;

- An audit of all sites where radioactive waste is

produced and/or stored (approx. 100 locations) to identify any management issues and requirements for facility upgrades (any insecure waste at these sites should be transferred to existing radioactive waste facilities at Esk (Qld), Mt Walton (WA), or Lucas Heights (NSW).

- A review of all possible options for managing radioactive waste, including but not limited to, a single remote co-located facility. This would supersede previous failed processes with the aim of finding a solution that is both scientifically rigorous and socially inclusive.

In the short term intermediate-level wastes should be containerised and placed in extended interim storage at Lucas Heights. The December 2015 return of reprocessed spent fuel waste from France and the current works program to increase ANSTO's storage capacity are consistent with this approach.

In addressing the problem of managing radioactive waste we must consider active waste minimisation strategies and look at options to phase out reactor based methods for radioisotope production. Exciting developments towards non-reactor based methods of medical isotope production are being advanced in Canada. Australia has a great opportunity to partner and work alongside institutions in Canada on this new technology that looks increasingly set to provide important medicine without generating dangerous wastes.

A pragmatic approach to the management of radioactive waste is to minimise its production. To do this we should immediately halt plans to increase production of radiopharmaceuticals for an overseas market but continue production for domestic supplies until non-reactor-based technologies such as cyclotrons are active. Federal government investment in research, development and implementation is required and will be encouraged by The Greens.

> INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR WASTE

There is a renewed push for the storage of international high-level nuclear waste in Australia. The economics of these proposals are deeply flawed; the benefits to Australia have been grossly over exaggerated and the long-term risks ignored. The waste from nuclear power is the most dangerous and long-lived waste known. No country in the world has been able to establish a high level nuclear waste disposal facility. The inability to contain nuclear waste overseas is a reason for Australia to stop supplying uranium, not a reason to impose it on the Australian environment and public.

The Greens will continue to ensure the federal legislative prohibitions on the importation, storage and disposal of international nuclear waste are maintained.

> THE PLAN

- Containerise and isolate domestic intermediate-level radioactive waste at ANSTO's Lucas Heights facility for extended interim storage.
- Hold an independent Inquiry into national radioactive waste production and management.
- Ensure non-imposition of radioactive waste management sites, commit to a siting process that is dependent on community consent.
- Remove the Wallerberdina nominated site from further consideration as a potential location for a national radioactive waste facility due to clear local opposition and given the unique cultural heritage values.
- Halt plans to increase production of medical isotopes for export and move towards non-reactor based production of medical isotopes.
- Ensure federal legislative prohibitions on the importation, storage and disposal of international nuclear waste are maintained.

> BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The PBO estimated that:

- \$31 million dollars would be saved from scrapping the existing flawed process. These funds would be redirected to a new process that includes an inquiry into best management options
- There would be a reduction in revenue (\$60 million) from stopping the expansion at Lucas Heights reactor – an expansion that would increase Australia's nuclear waste inventory while supplying overseas markets.
- There are no cost implications to protect Australia from International Radioactive Waste.



Adnyamathanha community seeking to protect Wallerberdina



Natural Springs and sacred site at Wallerberdina

> COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITIES

While the Liberal and Labor Governments have disproportionately targeted remote Aboriginal communities to host the Nation's worst industrial waste the Australian Greens have instead worked with the communities to protect the environment and cultural heritage from becoming the Nation's dumping ground for nuclear waste.

To the credit of the communities at Coober Pedy and Tennant Creek the proposals to dump waste in their homelands were defeated. The Australian Greens are committed to a process that does not impose nuclear waste on unwilling communities. The Greens are committed to working with Adnyamathanha and the communities in the Flinders Ranges to defeat the current proposal to store nuclear waste at Wallerberdina.