

Federal government nuclear fuel waste Store targets SA postcodes

Briefer (April 2017) by David Noonan, Independent Environment Campaigner

For eighteen months the Federal government has targeted SA postcodes for the so called “National Radioactive Waste Management Facility”. This Waste Facility is really **two dumps in one**:

- **The Reactor’s Nuclear Waste dump:** An above-ground **Store** that is intended to operate for 100 years, primarily for irradiated Nuclear Fuel Wastes and long lived Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) from ANSTO’s Lucas Heights reactor that require isolation from the environment for over 10 000 years. **There are serious safety issues in this Store plan;**
- **A near-surface radioactive waste disposal:** To bury and dispose of various Low Level and Short Lived Intermediate Level wastes which require isolation for approximately 300 years.

Having faced up to the threat of an International nuclear waste dump, communities across SA are coming together to contest the Federal government plan to impose the NRWM Facility onto SA.

The Federal government plan to impose a Store for Nuclear Fuel Wastes onto an SA postcode has a lot in common with the State government proposal for an International nuclear waste dump:

- Nuclear wastes affect the rights, interests and safety of all South Australians and target Aboriginal communities in a serious threat to their human rights, culture and country;
- Both nuclear dumps are *illegal* in SA under the *Nuclear Waste Storage (Prohibition) Act 2000*. The import, transport, storage and disposal of these nuclear wastes is prohibited:

“The Objects of this Act are to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of South Australia and to protect the environment in which they live by prohibiting the establishment of certain nuclear waste storage facilities in this State”;

- Both dumps entail long term above-ground storage of nuclear fuel wastes *without* any waste disposal capacity. Safety is compromised by the proposed import of nuclear waste to SA. Nuclear waste dumps represent a multi-generational threat to community interests - if imported, these long lived nuclear wastes are highly unlikely to ever leave SA;
- Both require use of an as yet unnamed port: with the Federal government failing to consult affected communities across SA on the plan to ship nuclear wastes into an SA port from the UK in 2020, direct from the Sydney reactor and from France over the following four decades;
- Both dumps expose SA to terrorist and security risks in shipping and transport and in long term above-ground storage of Nuclear Fuel Wastes and other long lived ILW wastes;

The Federal Cabinet are due to make a final decision on siting the reactor’s nuclear waste dump in late 2017 - however this decision may be delayed until after the SA State Election in March 2018.

Aboriginal rights & interests must be respected by *both* Federal and SA governments:

Premier Weatherill must respond to the Federal government targeting the Flinders Ranges and reject plans to impose an illegal nuclear waste dump on the country of the Adnyamathanha people.

The Premier has committed to provide Aboriginal communities a right of veto over proposed International nuclear waste facilities on their land (Jay Weatherill in *The Advertiser*, 18 Nov 2016):

"...local Aboriginal people would be given a final right of veto on any future facility.

"A key finding of the citizens' jury was the importance of listening to local Aboriginal communities. Their evidence to the jury was compelling.

"This final right of veto would exist if a proposed facility would affect their lands and would not be overridden by the broader community.

"Their voice must be heard and their consent is essential."

The Premier should extend the same respect and *right of veto* to the Adnyamathanha people.

The Federal Minister holds a draconian discretionary power under the *National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012* (NRWMA) to over-ride both Federal and State Aboriginal Heritage Acts.

Sec.12 & 13 of the NRWMA state that *"the significance of land in the traditions of Indigenous people ... has no effect to the extent that it would regulate, hinder or prevent"* actions authorised by Sec.11 *Selecting the site for a facility*. **SA community must come together to see that this doesn't happen.**

In the lead-up to the SA Election in March 2018, the public expect all political parties & candidates to support community and to reject Federal imposition of illegal nuclear waste dumps anywhere in SA.

Nuclear wastes should be retained on-site at the Lucas Heights reactor:

Lucas Heights is the best placed institution and facility to responsibly manage Australia's nuclear fuel wastes and can do so throughout the proposed operating period of the current 'Opal' reactor.

An existing "Interim Waste Store" (IWS) at Lucas Heights has already received reprocessed nuclear fuel waste from France. This IWS was built in 2015 with a design life of 40 years and an operations plan to allow it to also take the reprocessed nuclear wastes to be received from the UK in 2020.

The ARPANSA "*Regulatory Assessment Report*" (May 2015) considered ANSTO contingency planning for the IWS to operate for longer than 40 years and to potentially store reprocessed nuclear fuel waste from France and from the UK at Lucas Heights *"until the availability of a final disposal option"*.

ANSTO reactor wastes represent the vast majority of long lived ILW that are intended to be transported to a proposed above ground Store site in SA. **This is a dangerous & unnecessary plan.**

ANSTO currently holds approx. 520 m³ of ILW, with approx. 500 m³ to arise from HIFAR reactor decommissioning in 2024, and an expected further approx. 500 m³ to be produced by Opal reactor operations through to the 2050's: totalling over 1500 m³ of ANSTO reactor long lived ILW.

In contrast: other Federal agencies hold approx. 100 m³ of ILW and States & Territories hold a total of 105 m³ of ILW – largely historical radioactive wastes with only minor projected future arising's.

For further info see: <http://archive.foe.org.au/waste> and <http://www.nodumpalliance.org.au/>