



**Public Health Association**  
AUSTRALIA

## **Letter to Centralian Advocate 5<sup>th</sup> December 2008**

### **Who will pick up the yellowcake?**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The proposal to train more radioactive ore from the Roxby Downs mine through Alice Springs (*Centralian Advocate* 28<sup>th</sup> Nov) raises public health issues.

This proposal, an extension of a 3 month trial averaging one train per month commenced a couple of years ago. The outcome of that 'trial or the rationale for why it has been extended has never been released by the NT government so we don't know on what basis this considerably expanded proposal is being considered.

These trains will carry highly radioactive uranium oxide in addition to the radioactive copper ore concentrate admitted to in the article.

This raises questions of how well prepared for any emergency can our essential services be to deal with accidents such as derailments caused by heat affected buckled lines, truck or passenger car collisions or other errors, many of which have already occurred to trains on this line.

This is not to question the professionalism of these services, but attending to radioactive spillage requires specifically trained emergency crews. With the high levels of staff turnover experienced in all occupations in the NT, how will this high level of training be maintained for all staff at all times, even if all positions are always filled?

We may also ask why is this proposal happening? While the SA Premier promotes uranium mining, like his WA counterpart, they know that the voters who live near their ports don't want it transported through their suburbs. So again Alice Springs residents are being asked to accept a public health hazard because no-one else wants it!

Clive Rosewarne  
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