



MEDIA RELEASE

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NT TRANSPORT WOES as SA URANIUM MINE GROWS

Environment and health organisations are deeply concerned about Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke's announcement this week that approval is granted for the huge Olympic Dam expansion in outback South Australia (SA).

The Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) in Alice Springs, the Environment Centre of the Northern Territory (ECNT) in Darwin and the Public Health Association of Australia are concerned this expansion will pose a risk to people and environments in the Northern Territory (NT). Additional uranium oxide (yellowcake) and two trains a day of radioactive copper concentrate will be transported via train through the NT to be exported from East Arm wharf. This is in addition to causing massive environmental damage in SA at the mine site and in areas of water extraction.

"The decision locks in a desalination plant in the Spencer Gulf, increased extraction of water from the Great Artesian Basin and a literal mountain of radioactive tailings in the SA outback. It places the burden of risk on the NT as radioactive ore is to be transported by rail to East Arm Wharf, in Darwin," ALEC Coordinator Jimmy Cocking said.

"Mile-long trains of radioactive copper and uranium will cut Alice Springs in half for more than 10 minutes each way. The NT Government and the Transport Minister have stood strong against the transport of nuclear waste due to unacceptable risks to the health of people and communities along the transport route. This is no different and should be opposed by the NT Government," Mr Cocking added.

Clive Rosewarne from the Public Health Association of Australia said, "Derailments and crossing accidents are an unfortunate fact on the Darwin to Adelaide rail line. Now the seriousness of the health risks associated with these accidents will be greatly increased due to the potential of exposure to radioactive materials. This risk is shared by people using crossings, living near to rail lines and particularly to emergency workers called out to accidents or passers by offering help in remote locations." Mr Rosewarne added, "This will increase pressure on emergency services and workers to have the facilities and trained personnel constantly at the ready for an eventuality of this type."

Cat Beaton from the Environment Centre NT said: "The Territory Government should not support the Olympic Dam mine expansion as it puts pressure on our railway and presents contamination risks to the environment and the Darwin Harbour. We have seen a series of incidents of

contamination at East Arm, how can we trust that the increase in radioactive material export will not harm our harbour?"

"The Darwin harbour is the healthiest capital city harbour in Australia, from transport to export, there's a lot to lose."

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