

Dear Sir,

The opponents of the proposed NT nuclear waste dump have correctly raised a number of key public health concerns- its long term safety, the risks involved in transporting radioactive materials and the impetus that establishing such a facility has for expanded Australia's role in the nuclear chain- increased reactor size at Lucas Heights and the importation of overseas waste.

Unfortunately the proponents of the dump plan have relied upon scare mongering. Instead of dealing with the facts they have simply attempted to manipulate people's fear around access to cancer and other treatments. Along with cynical misinformation the federal government is now waving the big stick of anti-democratic legislation to override the NT's concerns on the dump.

As Peter Tait from the Medical Association for the Prevention of War has correctly noted, the necessary materials for these treatments can be sourced elsewhere either through other technologies, or through international suppliers.

This argument in favour of the nuclear industry has been tried and discredited in the past. It is indeed a perverse irony that when promoting an industry that has many levels of potential health risk at every stage of its chain, that anyone including politicians should use health treatment concerns to justify one of its end products- radioactive waste, the other being nuclear weapons, both immense and unresolved public health threats.

Whilst strongly endorsing the well founded opposition to the proposed nuclear waste dump by traditional owners, community groups, professional bodies and the NT Parliament, the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is concerned that we are focussing on only one part of the problem. At the other end of the process there is currently underway a massive increase in uranium exploration on our doorstep.

The PHAA believes that if we are to be consistent in our concern over the nature of the end product of the nuclear chain, then we should be addressing it at its source- mining.

The public health threats associated with mining include (depending upon the mining method), localised groundwater contamination, groundwater depletion to support milling, dust born contamination from tailings dams, radiation exposure to mine staff, spillage of material during transportation and the exposure to radiation of non-mine people if sites such as tailings dams are not secured.

Examples of all these 'accidents' have occurred in the Australian uranium mining industry in recent years.

In addition, the establishment of uranium mines has often been an exceptionally stressful event for local - mainly Aboriginal -populations. This has added new pressures to the immense health burden already prevalent in these communities.

The Public Health Association of Australia strongly urges NT residents to continue to stand up for their rights to reject the dangers of an imposed federal nuclear waste dump. Given that Australian uranium becomes nuclear waste it is also important at the same

time to work effectively to stop the production of the ore that commences the chain of events that cause that problem.

Clive Rosewarne
NT Branch President
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