

Media Release
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ANSTO plan means no rush for NT nuclear dump site

Environmentalists say that plans by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) to construct a new radioactive waste storage building at Lucas Heights mean there is no need for the federal government to push ahead with a nuclear dump in the NT.

“ANSTO’s application to construct another waste storage building on its existing site provides breathing space for targeted communities in the Territory,” said Natalie Wasley, Beyond Nuclear Initiative (BNI) campaigner in Alice Springs.

“This development is a welcome acknowledgement of the continuing deep concern and opposition to the current NT dump proposal and provides a clear circuit breaker in a long running debate.

There is no need for the federal government to pursue the NT dump plan, or continue to follow the flawed Howard-style process in managing this serious issue. The Rudd government should now honour its commitment to repeal the highly undemocratic Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act, which allows a dump to be imposed on the NT community”.

ANSTO’s application states the planned new facility will ‘enable appropriate storage, monitoring and inspection’ (1).

“It seems logical that these ongoing operations should occur close to the site of production, where most of Australia’s nuclear trained scientists are located”, said Ms Wasley.”

“Why truck waste thousands of kilometres when the majority of the waste earmarked for the NT dump is produced by ANSTO at Lucas Heights?”

The Australian Radiation Production and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) Nuclear Safety Committee noted in 2005 "There have also been considerable effort and resources expended on ensuring that waste arising from production can be stored on-site for many years... ANSTO advised that there was currently 30 years capacity in the intermediate level waste store for OPAL operating waste... ANSTO expects to have the capacity to store its solid low level radioactive waste arisings for the next 40 years." (2)

“The federal ALP should dump the current NT plan and initiate a open, credible and scientific process for managing nuclear waste,” Ms Wasley said.

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(1) EPBC Referral from ANSTO p2

(2) ARPANSA's Nuclear Safety Committee, September 2005, "Report on the ANSTO application for a licence to operate a replacement research reactor".