

## **Community welcomes Senate report recommendation to scrap waste dump laws**

Territory Environment groups, traditional owners and community members have welcomed a Senate Committee report released today, which recommends repealing federal powers to impose a federal radioactive waste dump on the NT.

The Senate Committee has called for the heavy-handed Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act to be repealed in the first few weeks of 2009 sittings, saying the legislation is “deeply flawed” and “not a suitable foundation on which to build Australian nuclear waste policy”.

The Senate report refers to continued opposition from communities and the Northern Territory government and states there is “no sound jurisdiction for targeting of the Northern Territory.”

“The report acknowledges the need for voluntary engagement in site selection processes and also access to legal appeal mechanisms. Neither of these rights is currently in place under the Howard government law,” explained Natalie Wasley from the Beyond Nuclear Initiative in Alice Springs.

Ms Wasley pointed to inaction on this issue since the federal election. “On paper the ALP policy is vastly different from the previous government, but in practice little has changed. Minister Ferguson has said nothing in the last year to indicate a different approach will occur.”

“Communities have been actively pursuing a response from Minister Ferguson but have been consistently disappointed with the lack of communication.”

Muckaty Traditional Owner Dianne Stokes said at the Senate hearings in Alice Springs that Mr Ferguson; “is not doing anything at the moment, he is not listening to us. He is getting our letters. I picked up a letter from him earlier. It is the same as the letter I received a few weeks ago. The story is the same. It is not a new letter. I think they are photocopying the same one”.

Mitch, who speaks up for Engawala community near the Harts Range site said “This Senate report is a stepping stone in getting the government to be honest and treat us with dignity and respect as First Nations people. This is a step forward for Territorians to have basic human rights acknowledged. The onus is now on Minister Martin Ferguson and Prime Minister Rudd to follow the recommendations”.

**Contact: Natalie Wasley 0429 900 774  
Mitch 08 8953 6175  
Dianne Stokes 0488 262 269**