



Hon. Brian Ellis, MLC., Chairperson,  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs,  
Parliament House, Perth, W.A. 6000.

Dear Mr. Elis,

Thank you for your letter regarding Petition #38: Uranium Mining in Western Australia.

Herewith are further comments from ANAWA which we hope will assist your committee in its deliberations.

Since the change of Government just over a year ago, there has been a strong push by Premier Barnett and Minister Moore to expedite uranium mining in Western Australia. This issue has, of course, been on ANAWA's agenda since its inception in 1998, and alive in the community for many years before that. We had hoped that the ALP, in line with its long-standing policy opposing uranium mining, would pass legislation to that effect. Since that didn't happen, we now have only regulatory hurdles for the nuclear industry to jump, rather than having a legislative barrier to this new industry getting under way in this state. There is a shortage of personnel in nuclear trained middle management, and in its enthusiasm to get the industry up and running before another election, we are concerned that short cuts may be taken.

It is a brand new field in the rich tapestry of the West Australian mining sector, with wide ranging ramifications. Because of the nature of radioactivity, which can alter the gene pool - a very serious factor which separates this industry quite clearly from all other mining endeavours - we would greatly appreciate a full enquiry by your committee.

We feel that the deepest, widest scrutiny possible should be applied to this industry, because of a multitude of worker health and safety issues, the possible damage to the environment (accidents do happen wherever humans are involved), and even when accidents are not occurring, there is risk of contamination of air and groundwater (occurring at either/both Ranger and Roxby Downs uranium mines, which are meant to be operating "world's best practice") and because of the international follow-on effects. We do not believe that the current Australian safeguards regime is adequate to determine that Australian uranium does not end up in the nuclear weapons programmes of our customers, or their clients.

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**ANTI-NUCLEAR ALLIANCE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

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Unfortunately, both major political parties display lack of consistency the nuclear issue: pushing for disarmament of nuclear weapons, refusing to allow Australia to become the world's nuclear waste dump, for the most part rejecting the idea of nuclear power in Australia, but with the exceptions of ALP in Queensland and W.A., keen to export the raw material to other countries.

There is a widespread perception that nuclear power is "needed" to mitigate the effects of climate change: although our petition does not directly address that issue, we believe it is that perception which is behind the rush to get uranium mining happening in this state. Of course, there are some short term financial benefits, but in the long run, our uranium will definitely add to world's mounting stockpile of nuclear waste, may be used for so-called "depleted uranium" weapons in the short term, and may also end up being used to manufacture nuclear weapons, which no sane person would support.

However, we contend that nuclear power is neither quick, nor clean, nor cheap. It takes 10 - 15 years to bring nuclear power online, whereas it is immediate short-term energy inputs which are required. It is not clean because at every stage of the nuclear chain, except for the boiling of the water in the reactor, greenhouse gases are emitted. Plus there's the possibility of accidents, which affect the environment for very long periods of time. On cost: nuclear energy is the most expensive power source available, which is why it is mostly command economy countries which have heavily subsidized power stations on order. Just by comparison, wind power costs 7c pkh while nuclear costs 14c pkh. Then there's the unsolved problem of radioactive waste .....

One of our member groups is Sustainable Energy Now, experts in demonstrating the capacity of renewable energy sources to deal with climate change issues, which combined with greater energy efficiency and conservation absolutely undercut the nuclear industry's arguments. SEN is available to make a presentation to your committee, as is the combined ANAWA team.

We are currently calling for a full public enquiry into BHP Billiton's proposed Yeerlirrie uranium mine because we feel that the Environmental Protection Authority, with the best will available, does not have the capacity to assess this project comprehensively, bearing in mind the international issues which are involved.

Our petition calls for the re-instatement of the ban on uranium mining in Western Australia, which would produce an outcome with integrity. We believe that this proposition deserves your attention and we hope it will occur with good co-operation from all stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,



Jo Vallentine,

Chairperson, ANAWA.

1/10/09.