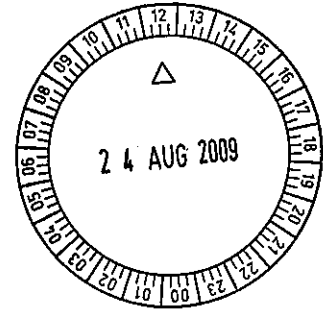




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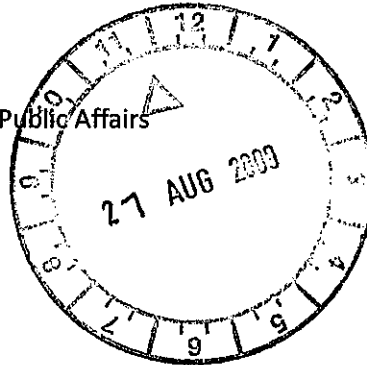
ANAWA
ANTI-NUCLEAR ALLIANCE
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Hon. Brian Ellis MLC, chairperson,

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Parliament House, Perth, 6000



Dar Chairperson and Members,

Thank you for your letter dated 18 August, 2009 regarding a petition to re-instate the ban on uranium mining in Western Australia.

ANAWA would greatly appreciate your committee investigating this topic further, because it is a major policy change, which we believe was not canvassed adequately in the run-up to the last election.

Although Premier Barnett's views on uranium mining have been well known for many years, he did not address the issue during the campaign, and we need to remind all concerned that his is a minority government. We feel that despite the rhetoric from the nuclear industry proclaiming its renaissance and its important role in combating climate change, the community does not generally support this move. And we would argue very strongly that the real facts regarding this insidious industry need to be fairly put before the electorate.

The industry exaggerates its own importance. It is unlikely to admit that more nuclear power stations are closing down around the world than are opening up, or that its share of providing base load power is gradually falling year by year. It is an industry in decline, as renewable are finally being seen as a better option for the future, a sustainable and non-polluting option, which we ignore at our peril.

So, establishing a very dirty industry, which requires very detailed monitoring as it progresses, and which has the unenviable record of producing two products which the world could well do without (i.e. radioactive waste and nuclear weapons, with power generation as a by-product), it is a very cynical move to get in, dig it up, ship it out while there's still a chance to make some money out a very dodgy product, before its day is finally done.

All the old arguments apply: carcinogenic materials are unleashed as uranium is mined, it can be used in nuclear weapons (and no safeguards can ensure that Australian uranium doesn't find its way into nuclear weapons programmes of some of our client nations, or their client states), and its waste problems are well known. After 64 years, this industry has completely failed to find a way of safely dealing with its waste, some aspects of which are radioactive for 4.7 billion years – no small task.

Added to all that however, is the falsehood of the industry's claim that it is carbon free. At every stage in the nuclear cycle, it emits greenhouse gases, except for the boiling-of-water-in-the-giant-kettle bit. In

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mining, milling (thousands of tonnes of rock need to be crushed to get the useful material --- in high grade ore, it's 660 parts to one, and much larger amounts of tailings when it's low grade ore), transport, reactor construction (very thick cement walls required), enrichment, reprocessing, decommissioning of reactors after they become too dangerous to use any more, and then more transport again to wherever the waste is "temporarily" stored. This industry is clutching at straws, trying to make itself relevant in these worrying days of climate change: it is not part of the answer.

And it's a great water guzzler. The BHP Billiton mine at Roxby Downs in South Australia currently uses 37 million litres of water per day, free of charge from the Great Artesian Basin, at considerable cost to the very fragile Mound Springs eco-systems nearby. In our goldfields and mid-west regions where many of the viable West Australian uranium deposits are located, it's desert conditions already. Why squander our most precious basic resource on the nuclear industry?

Apart from the above environmental concerns, there is the question of cost as well. Nowhere has the nuclear industry independently made good. It has always had massive government subsidies. Risks of extraordinarily expensive accidents if things go wrong (as they always will, sooner or later, when humans are involved) has meant that insurance companies won't touch the nuclear industry: it is up to governments – citizens, taxpayers, to foot the enormous clean-up bills, and it's a job never finished! A quick financial comparison between wind power at 7c per kilowatt hour and nuclear energy at 14c per kilowatt hour (*Lester Brown, Earth Policy Institute – Plan B update, 28/20/08*), should suffice to show that nuclear energy is not part of the energy revolution we need to provide for our future.

Also, it's too slow to come on line. Reactors take 10 -15 years to build. Most of the ones under construction at the moment are in government controlled economies – very few are being built in market economies. To cut greenhouse emissions and to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, the world needs conservation measures and a suite of renewable energy options immediately.

So, our alliance feels that it's a retrograde step, and that the nuclear pushers are out of tune with those most concerned for the future, who are mostly also without vested interests of a financial nature. I enclose a few short documents introducing ANAWA's BUMPS campaign, and also a basic fact sheet about uranium, and water usage.

Please feel free to contact us for more detailed information. We thank you for your interest in this matter of public importance, which could have wide-ranging ramifications for the environment, and for the health and safety of West Australian citizens.

Yours sincerely,



Jo Vallentine, chairperson.

20/8/09.