

Nuclear Power: No Solution To Climate Change

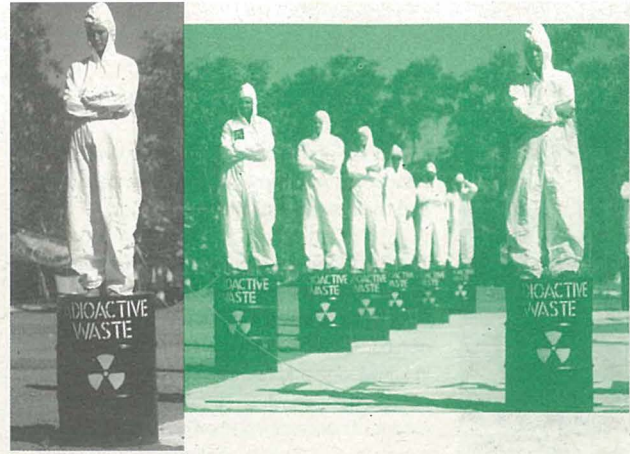
The nuclear industry, long in decline in Europe and the US, has seized on climate change to promote nuclear power as a 'climate friendly' energy source. Now, there is a push to introduce nuclear power reactors in Australia.

Nuclear power could at most provide a very partial and problematic 'solution' to climate change. To double nuclear power output by the middle of the century would require the construction of about 1,000 reactors with a capital cost of several thousand billion dollars. The reactors would produce 1.5 million tonnes of high-level nuclear waste over a 50-year lifespan, and they would produce enough plutonium to build 1.5 million nuclear weapons. The climate dividend? A lousy 5% reduction in greenhouse emissions - about one-tenth of the reduction required.

That meagre 5% climate dividend assumes that the comparison is with fossil fuels. If the comparison is with renewables and energy efficiency measures, nuclear power results in 'increased' greenhouse emissions in addition to the legacy of nuclear waste and plutonium. A US study found that, per dollar invested, energy efficiency measures yield greenhouse emission reductions seven times greater than nuclear power.

The nuclear 'cure' would be as bad as the disease. Expansion of nuclear power would inevitably lead to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Four or five countries have used their 'peaceful' nuclear programs to develop arsenals of nuclear weapons - India, Israel, Pakistan, South Africa and possibly North Korea. In the five 'declared' nuclear weapons states - the US, UK, France, China and Russia - nuclear power programs provide a large pool of nuclear expertise from which WMD programs draw. It is no coincidence that the five declared nuclear weapons states all have nuclear power programs and that they account for almost 60% of global nuclear power output.

There are many, viable clean-energy alternatives in the fields of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. See the report, 'Nuclear Power: No Solution to Climate Change', by Friends of the Earth and other environmental and medical groups, on the internet at: <www.melbourne.foe.org.au/documents.htm>



Dumping On Northern Territorians

The Howard government's plan to dump nuclear waste on Aboriginal land in SA was defeated by the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta (www.iratiwanti.org) and environmental groups. But now the government is attempting to impose a nuclear dump on the Northern Territory - despite having made unequivocal promises not to do so before the 2004 federal election.

Three sites are being considered - Hart's Range and Mt Everard in Central Australia, and Fisher's Ridge near Katherine. None of these sites was short-listed when environmental and scientific criteria were used to locate potential dump sites in the 1990s.

Along with low and intermediate level waste from around Australia, the dump would take highly radioactive waste from reprocessed spent fuel rods from the nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights in Sydney.

Draconian legislation was passed through the federal parliament last year to by-pass normal decision-making processes in relation to the proposed nuclear waste dump. This legislation undermines environmental, public safety and Aboriginal heritage protections.

We can't leave the fight to Northern Territorians - we need a national campaign to prevent this imposition of nuclear poison.

- More information on the NT nuclear dump plan:
- * Nuclear Territory News <www.ntnews.info/breaking.php>
 - * Environment Centre Northern Territory <www.ecnt.org>
 - * Alice Action <groups.yahoo.com/group/aliceaction>
 - * NT nuclear dump wiki: <en.wikinews.org/wiki/Opposing_a_nuclear_waste_dump_in_the_Northern_Territory>
 - * Friends of the Earth <www.foe.org.au>

What YOU can do for a nuclear free Australia

Better Active today than radioactive tomorrow!

THIS IS A CRUCIAL YEAR IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE DIRTY, DANGEROUS NUCLEAR INDUSTRY

*** DUMPING ON THE NORTHERN TERRITORY:**
The Howard government's plan to dump nuclear waste in South Australia was defeated but now the government plans to impose the waste on Northern Territorians.

*** URANIUM MINING:**
The Howard government is doing everything it can to expand uranium mining, including seizing control of uranium mining powers in the Northern Territory.

*** INTERNATIONAL HIGH-LEVEL NUCLEAR DUMP:**
A consortium with links to Pangea Resources plans to return to Australia for another attempt to build an international high-level nuclear waste dump here; in their words, they intend to "deliberately try to stir the pot".

*** NUCLEAR POWER:**
The push to introduce nuclear power plants into Australia will continue.

*** PROPAGANDA:**
The propaganda about a nuclear 'solution' to climate change will continue, even while the true solutions - energy efficiency measures and renewable energy sources - are ignored and underfunded. The industry-funded Uranium Information Centre says there will be a major pro-uranium 'information' campaign this year.

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Despite the enthusiastic support of the Liberal/National Coalition government for uranium mining, just one new uranium mine has begun production in Australia in the past decade. The Beverley mine in South Australia began commercial production in 2001 and produces about 10% of Australia's uranium exports, with Ranger in the NT and Olympic Dam in SA producing the rest.

Traditional Owners and environmental groups have enjoyed some major victories over the past decade. A major national campaign led by the Mirarr Traditional Owners stopped the Jabiluka mine in the NT. The federal government has effectively ruled out uranium mining at Koongarra in the Kakadu National Park.

However, rising uranium prices have driven a wave of uranium exploration in the past two years and the Coalition government is doing everything it can to expand uranium mining. It has seized control of uranium mining powers in the Northern Territory. A 'steering committee' has been formed to remove impediments to an expansion of the industry.

A parliamentary 'inquiry' comprising pro-nuclear members of the Coalition and Labor parties has been touring the country and

will issue a pro-uranium report this year. The industry-funded Uranium Information Centre says there will be a major pro-uranium 'information' campaign this year.

Labor maintains its policy of no new uranium mines, but the policy is being challenged from within the party and could be overturned at the ALP national conference early next year.

The adverse environmental impacts of uranium mining in Australia have been significant. The Olympic Dam uranium/copper mine on Kothaka land in SA illustrates the scale of the environmental impacts: the mine has produced a radioactive tailings dump of 60 million tonnes, growing at 10 million tonnes annually with no plans for its long-term management.

The Olympic Dam mine's daily extraction of over 30 million litres of water from the Great Artesian Basin has adversely impacted on the fragile Mound Springs. Yet there are now plans to triple production at Olympic Dam and to increase the water take to 150 million litres per day.

A further concern is that the regulation of uranium mining is inadequate. For example, the Olympic Dam mine enjoys a range of exemptions from the South Australian

Environmental Protection Act, the Water Resources Act, the Aboriginal Heritage Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

The 2003 Senate Inquiry into the regulation of uranium mining in Australia reported "a pattern of under-performance and non-compliance", it identified "many gaps in knowledge and found an absence of reliable data on which to measure the extent of contamination or its impact on the environment", and it concluded that changes were necessary "in order to protect the environment and its inhabitants from serious or irreversible damage".

Australian uranium is converted into high-level nuclear waste in nuclear power reactors around the world, yet there is still not a single repository anywhere in the world for the disposal of high-level nuclear waste. There is increasing talk of Australia becoming the world's nuclear waste dump.

A nuclear weapon powerful enough to destroy a city requires a mere 10 kg of plutonium. Australia's uranium exports, once irradiated in nuclear power reactors, have produced about 80 tonnes of plutonium – enough for about 8,000 nuclear weapons – yet it is widely acknowledged that the international 'safeguards' system is fundamentally flawed and limited.

Australia's uranium mining industry may expand with proposed exports to China - a nuclear weapons state which has not signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Proponents of uranium sales to China overlook the fundamental difficulty of assuring peaceful uses of Australian uranium in a closed and secretive society. The Communist state regime in China has an appalling human rights record, and China still ranks in the worst ten countries in the world for press freedom.

What You Can Do To Help Build A Nuclear-free Australia

It's a crucial period in the movement for a nuclear-free Australia. If you'd like to get involved, contact:

Melbourne: FoE

Anti-Uranium Collective

Michaela Stubbs
<michaela.stubbs@foe.org.au>
0429 136935

Friends of the Earth's Anti-Uranium Collective meets each Wednesday, 6:30pm, 312 Smith St, Collingwood, Melbourne

Adelaide: FoE

Clean Futures Collective

Joel Catrchlove
<joel.catrchlove@foe.org.au>
0403 886 951

Peter Burdon

<peterburdon@student.adelaide.edu.au>
(08) 9524 4385.

Friends of the Earth's Clean Futures

Collective meets each Tuesday, 5:30pm, Conservation Centre, 120 Wakefield St, Adelaide.

Alice Springs: Alice Action

E: <aliceactioninfo@yahoo.com.au>

Alice Action meets every Wednesday 6pm at ALEC, 39 Handley St, Alice Springs.

Perth: Anti-Nuclear Alliance of WA

Ph (08) 9271 4488.

E: <admin@anawa.org.au>

Brisbane FoE

* Anti-Nuclear Collective:
ph Robyn 04 1111 8737

* Food Irradiation Watch:

ph FoE (07) 3846 5793.
<foodirradiationwatch@yahoo.com.au>
<www.foodirradiationinfo.org>

There are many other groups involved in anti-nuclear campaigning around the country - for details, phone Jim Green 0417 318368 or email <jim.green@foe.org.au>.

FoE's 2006 Radioactive

Exposure Tour of SA and the NT will be held mid-year. See for yourself the environmental impacts of the nuclear industry and hear from Traditional Owners. Contact FoE if you're interested in coming, and check the pics and audio from the 2004 trip at: <www.melbourne.foe.org.au/PART_2004/index.htm>

Stay in touch:

* subscribe to No Nukes News, FoE's monthly email newsletter; email <jim.green@foe.org.au> with 'NNN Subscribe' in the subject line.

More information:

* Friends of the Earth
<www.foe.org.au>
* Australian Conservation Foundation
<www.acfonline.org.au>
* SA FoE Clean Futures Collective
<www.geocities.com/olympicdam>
* Dr. Gavin Mudd
<www.sea-us.org.au>
* Anti-Nuclear Alliance of WA
<www.anawa.org.au>
* Medical Association for the Prevention of War
<www.mapw.org.au>