

112 THOMSON RD
CLAREMONT 6010
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

30/4/02

PROFESSOR PETER NEWMAN
DIRECTOR, SUSTAINABILITY POLICY UNIT
POLICY OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET
15th FLOOR, 197 ST GEORGES TERRACE
PERTH WA 6000

SUBMISSION TO: FOCUS ON THE FUTURE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE FOLLOWING -

- 1) for giving members of the public the opportunity of participating in this important consultation
- 2) MEDICAL ISOTOPES
for your decision to invite tenders for a cyclotron for the production of medical isotopes at Sir Charles Gairdiner Hospital
- 3) WAVE- POWER PROJECT
for seeking Federal backing for this natural power project.
- 4) SUBSIDATION OF SOLAR POWER
for continuing to subsidize this form of energy for domestic use
- 5) WIND-POWER FARMS
for continuing to support these farms in Albany, Denham and Esperance
- 6) BIOMASS PROJECTS
for supporting bio-mass projects
- 7) HYDRO POWER
for supporting Hydro power projects

For Information on Sustainable energy projects and Policies in the UK please contact Professor Godfrey Boyle Co-director of the Energy and Environment Research Unit at the UK Open University He is co-author of Renewable energy: Power for A Sustainable Future. His website is <http://www-tec.open.ac.uk/eeru>

2

NON -SUSTAINABLE ENERGY POLICIES

- 1) URANIUM (YEELIRRIE) AGREEMENT ACT 1978

This AGREEMENT was made between the Coalition Government and Western Mining.
The Yeelirrie site has been explored and found to contain uranium ore .

Mining itself has not commenced. Item 65 of the LABOR 2000 PLATFORM STATES "In relation to mining and milling Labor will prevent, on returning to government, the development of any new uranium mines." The Gallop Government was elected on this promised platform of mining policies and must now honour it. It must now refuse to allow Western Mining to develop Yeelirrie into an operating mine. Of course royalties will have to be sacrificed. When considered against the cost of the long term adverse effects of mining on public health these costs are minimal. Many people believe that pollution from mining is low level and of no more consequence than background radiation.

This is not true. Open -cut mining contaminates the atmosphere. The latest form of sulphuric acid leaching to extract uranium is open to accidents as was shown earlier this year at Beverly in South Australia. The groundwater can become contaminated with uranium particles as well as with the leachate. Please refer to THE ECOLOGIST VOL 29 NO7 1999 ,PAGE 395 for discussion of the dangers of low -level radiation.

This form of mining is not permitted any where in Western Europe any longer. It is possible that Western Mining might seek to sue the Government. However I believe that most women in this State would support the Government. The example of the deleterious effect of mining in Jabiluka is well known. The cost of damages would be willingly shared by parents in order to protect their health and that of their children.

I have no doubt that companies such as PANGAEA would officially return to this State and exert enormous pressure upon the Government to move on from mining to reprocessing spent fuel and then to building our own reactor and burying our own waste . Pangea`s own unofficial representatives have remained here and continue to press this case whenever possible. Mining is the thin edge of the nuclear wedge.

Some people believe that it is immoral for us to export uranium and then to refuse to bury that waste " in our own backyard". I agree with them but I think that we need to go one step back. It is more immoral to mine and export it in the first place, knowing what we do about the nature of the nuclear fuel cycle and its toxic waste products.

Would our community support the export of heroin if we grew it here on the grounds that it is the responsibility of users? Why is the supplying of heroin a criminal responsibility and not the supplying of uranium? Both have temporary advantages for the users and both have lethal consequences.

RENEWAL OF THE YEELIRRIE AGREEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

It is in the nature of democratic politics that governments may change at election time. But the Yeelirrie Agreement is framed in such a way that it appears to allow for periodic review only for the alteration of specific working arrangements.

This is 3 fundamentally undemocratic as it presupposes that the Act itself is not subject to annulment. The Labor Government has the mandate of its electors to annul the Agreement. If it does so it will be valued and remembered for its leadership and courage and for a historic decision. We do not need Yeelirrie to be a world heritage area like Jabiluka for this approach to be valid. Our heritage is the whole of this state and the legacy that we leave of it to our children. Our moral duty is to protect them from the dangers that we know about. Surely there can be nothing more sinful than knowingly to blight the health of a foetus by allowing its parents to suffer damage to their reproductive systems ,or else, to cause radiation damage to infants.

The real effects of radiation are slow to develop and the nuclear industry responsible will argue that their energy policies allow for sustainable development because they are reducing Greenhouse gases, and have often won their cases in court because not enough epidemiological research had been done in that particular residential area . But this Government is one of honourable men and women who do not believe in becoming powerful and rich at the expense of the health of the people.

2)THE WA GREENS NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES (PROHIBITION) BILL 2001

I ask the government to pass this Bill and make it law. This would be an outstanding political action and a crucial step in ensuring a sustainable future for the population of this State .If you do this you will save us from the impossible task of decommissioning and cleaning up our State from the release of plutonium and other toxic radionuclides into our environment. No foreign company will do that for us.

THE REASONS WHY I BELIEVE THAT NUCLEAR POWER IS UNSUSTAINABLE ARE AS FOLLOWS--

A)NUCLEAR POWER AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The argument by the nuclear industry that nuclear power is ideally suited to meet the Kyoto Protocol and reduce carbon emissions is used to promote its interest .Enormous quantities of fossil fuels are still needed for the construction of power plants and the distribution of nuclear fuels. The short- term answer is to continue to use fossil fuels but to do so more efficiently while devoting finance and research to developing our alternate energy resources still further than we have already done.

B) NUCLEAR PROBLEMS IN THE UK, USA AND OTHER COUNTRIES THAT ARE RELEVANT FOR US IN WA IN OUR SEARCH FOR A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY POLICY

We stand on the threshold of major decisions about which energy policy to choose as Britain did in the 1960s

I believe that the extent of toxic pollution in England is not well understood in Australia. The contamination of air, water and earth has been proved to lead to bone diseases, genetic diseases, cancers and leukemia especially in children. This is not only from the high level waste, but also from low level waste. The articles in the 4 enclosed issue of the ECOLOGIST VOL 29 NO 7 1999 e-mail ecologist@gn.apc.org are written by highly reputable people and all their references are documented and can be verified.

Please refer to page 386 NUCLEAR POWER:TIME TO END THE EXPERIMENT by Peter Bunyard and Pete Roche and also page 412 NUCLEAR POWER - A DEAD LOSS by Peter Bunyard.

C) THE MYTH OF SUSTAINABLE NUCLEAR ENERGY THROUGH REPROCESSING SPENT FUEL
MOX fuel is an economic disaster. It is produced by re-processing spent fuel to extract the plutonium and then mixing it with re-processed and fresh uranium. It is very expensive to produce. It is designed for fast breeder reactors, which in some countries have been plagued by sodium leaks and fires. The re-processing produces more plutonium than it saves .The plutonium in MOX fuel can be used for weapons and is a target for terrorists. Please refer to p392 THE POLITICS OF MOX by Peter Roche and Linda Gardiner.

This industry has been failing for some time because the British public has suffered enough from afflictions caused by inhaling toxic air and eating and drinking contaminated food and water and has refused to subsidise it any longer. Britain has not built any new power stations for many years. British Nuclear Fuels` project for reprocessing toxic waste into MOX fuel has been found to be hazardous as the Monju accident in Japan showed. It is also more expensive than using uranium fuel and also gives rise to waste. The "recycling" program has failed. The British Government recently ordered BNF to clean up Cumbria, which is one of the most polluted nuclear areas in Western Europe. The Irish Government is currently suing the British Government in the International Court of Justice for polluting the Irish Sea. As a result of all these factors BNF has gone bankrupt and the government has had to assume financial responsibility. This fundamentally means the British public.

If a nuclear industry is established in Australia this result will, in the future, be inevitable and the task of cleaning up Australia will be impossible to achieve.

Please refer to attached newspaper cutting from THE INDEPENDENT

- a) IRELAND IN POSTCARD PROTEST OVER SELLAFIELD POLLUTION 13/2/02
- b)US NUCLEAR PLANT CLOSE TO DISASTER 27/3/02
- c)BUSH TO DUMP NUCLEAR WASTE IN EARTHQUAKE ZONE 15/3/02
- D) TERRORIST ATTACKS

The overriding cause of fear in Britain and the USA today is of nuclear attack by terrorists on a nuclear installation. Because of this, the British Government has recently taken the unprecedented step of revealing the transport routes of all nuclear materials throughout Britain, believing that it is their greater responsibility to alert local councils and

the police, hospitals and fire services so that emergency measures can be taken. Exactly what these would be is contentious. Several eminent nuclear scientists have now, albeit reluctantly, conceded that there is no safe level of radiation and therefore any release of toxic nuclear materials into the atmosphere is harmful.

5

Please refer to the attached article by DR ROSALIE BERTELL which deals with the long term effects of radiation of all doses , no matter how small .

E) CONTAMINATION OF OUR COASTLINE , HARBOURS AND ADJOINING RIVERS

The pollution of the coast of Cumbria and parts of the IRISH SEA and the NORTH SEA , reaching as far as Norway , should alert us to the dangers of toxic pollution that can result from nuclear plants as well as from accidents resulting from leaks from visiting nuclear submarines or warships. Such accidents could be technical faults or else the result of terrorist attacks . Vessels moored just outside our harbours still constitute a grave threat to our health and safety as leaked radioactive particles can be carried in the sea or in the air. Vessels moored at Garden Island pose a similar threat.

The immediate benefits to local traders must be seen in relation to the longer term threats to the population as a whole. The problems arising from the naval dockyard of Plymouth are relevant. Norway is considering legal action against Britain over radiation discharges, including technetium 99 ,from Sellafield that end up on its coast .

NUCLEAR FREE ZONES

This year the WA Labour government has overturned previous Coalition policy and has expressed its willingness to consider nuclear free zone legislation by local councils and shires. Certain exceptions will be made ,such as medical isotopes. The government is to be heartily congratulated for this important decision which allows the citizens of this State to protect their health and safety and environment. All of these functions are consistent with local government responsibilities. Nuclear Free declarations alone by Councils have no legal value. They need to be incorporated into local Town Planning Acts.

JUDY FORSYTH

This submission also included the following attachments:

<i>Attachment A:</i>	<i>The Ecologist Vol29 No 7 1999</i>
<i>Attachment B:</i>	<i>Newspaper Cuttings from the Independent</i>
	<i>- Ireland in Postcard Protest</i>
	<i>- US Nuclear Plant Close to Disaster</i>
	<i>- Bush to Dump Nuclear Waste in Earthquake Zone</i>
<i>Attachment C:</i>	<i>Dr Rosalie Bertell. Part One. The Problem – Nuclear Radiation and its Biological Effects</i>

Contact the Sustainability Policy Unit of the Department of Premier and Cabinet to obtain copies.