

Media Release

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**International opposition to release of radioactive water from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station**

Friends of the Earth (FoE) Australia today made a submission to Japan’s Ministry for Economy Trade and Energy (METI) demanding that it reconsider its plans to release 1.19 million m3 of radioactively contaminated water currently stored at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station.

Spokesman Jim Green said, “From the beginning, FoE Australia has followed the Fukushima nuclear disaster and its aftermath. From the beginning we have recognised it as an international issue. We criticised the Australian Government for its complicity in the disaster through its approval of exports of uranium to fuel the nuclear reactors.

“Now we are concerned about the impact of the release of radioactive water on the marine environment and on the people of Fukushima, in particular on people working in the fishing industry.

“We wish to express our solidarity with the victims of the nuclear disaster. We are appalled at how they have been abandoned by Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) and the Japanese Government. Release of radioactively contaminated water will inflict further suffering on people who are just starting to rebuild their lives.

“In the selection process for the (now postponed) 2020 Olympics, the Japanese Government tried to mislead the world when it said that the situation at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station was under control. The current plan to release radioactive water is another example of the Japanese Government trying to sweep the unresolved problems under the carpet. TEPCO and the Japanese Government must not be allowed to foist the costs of the nuclear disaster onto the marine environment.

“The radioactive contaminated water in question is often presented to the public as having had all radionuclides except for tritium removed through treatment by an advanced liquid processing system (ALPS). Altogether, the accumulated treated water contains about 860 trillion becquerels of tritium. However, the ALPS treatment process has not completely removed all the other radionuclides. In fact, the concentration of 62 radionuclides other than tritium exceeds the effluent standard in about 72% of the water currently stored in tanks.

“Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) says it will conduct secondary treatment if it releases radioactive materials into the ocean and keep these radioactive nuclides below the standard values, but, in view of the problems experienced with water treatment using ALPS in the past, we fear that this standard will not be achieved. Moreover, even if secondary treatment were carried out, it would be impossible to completely remove these radionuclides. We would be very concerned if any of these radioactive substances were released into the ocean.

“Furthermore, we do not accept that tritium is as benign as the government makes it out to be. Experts disagree on the health effects of tritium. There is a view that when tritium replaces hydrogen in organic compounds it stays in the body for a long time and affects nearby cells and that, when it replaces hydrogen in DNA and subsequently decays into helium, the effect of exposure becomes stronger.

“METI says it is considering two options: (1) release as water vapour, and (2) dilute and release directly into the ocean as water. Of these, its preferred option is the second: to discharge the water directly into the ocean. It claims that by around summer 2022 there will be no vacant area where tanks can be installed within the site of the nuclear power plant.

“But ocean discharge is not the only available option. Alternatives have been proposed, including by the Citizens Commission on Nuclear Energy (CCNE), an NGO whose members include nuclear engineers. For example, CCNE has proposed storage in large tanks, or solidification into mortar for subsequent disposal. The government has not given due consideration to these proposals.”

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