

Why impose *indefinite storage* of ANSTO nuclear waste onto SA when its already in safe and secure Extended Storage at Lucas Heights?

Briefing by David Noonan, Independent Campaigner, 06 August 2021

“Waste can be safely stored at Lucas Heights for decades to come”, the CEO of ARPANSA, the federal nuclear safety regulator, stated in evidence to a Senate Inquiry (June 2020).

ARPANSA has a safety *Contingency* to retain ANSTO’s highly hazardous nuclear fuel waste and long-lived Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) in safe and secure extended storage on-site at Lucas Heights *“until the availability of a final disposal option”*. Disposal is International Best Practise.

ANSTO’s existing Store for reprocessed nuclear fuel waste is safety rated for 40 years and [\\$60 million was allocated in the Federal Budget](#) to extend ILW storage at Lucas Heights by a decade to 2037.

In contrast: the federal government’s agenda is to *impose* the transfer ANSTO’s nuclear waste into *indefinite storage* on to the Eyre Peninsula [farming community](#) in SA and not give SA a Say.

ANSTO plan to double Australia’s nuclear waste inventory and just truck and ship it out ([targeting the Port of Whyalla](#)). The Industry Department refuses to address *disposal* of nuclear waste until *after* completion of siting a nuclear waste Store in SA ([compromising safety and security in SA](#)).

Federal Minister Pitt will make a formal site declaration later this year. Traditional owners the **Barngarla People** are unwilling to have nuclear waste on their country and will take [legal action](#).

Imposition of a federal nuclear dump in SA will be a public interest issue in the **SA State Election** in Marsh. Peak body Conservation SA’s 2022 State Election Asks calls on all Political Parties to:

"Waste: Actively oppose the Federal Government's attempt to create a temporary Intermediate level waste facility in SA until a comprehensive, long-term solution is in place for the disposal of Australia's long lived radioactive waste."

[Premier Stephen Marshall must stand up for South Australia's interests](#) and push back on federal Liberal government imposition of an *unlawful* nuclear waste dump in our State. The Premier has a duty to respect and uphold the law in SA which prohibits the import, transport, storage and disposal of ANSTO nuclear fuel waste and ILW. ARPANSA says these wastes require isolation for 10 000 years.

The [NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE FACILITY \(PROHIBITION\) ACT 2000](#) was passed by SA’s previous **Liberal Premier John Olsen** and then strengthened by **Labor Premier Mike Rann**:

- *The objects of this Act are to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of South Australia and to protect the environment in which they live by prohibiting the establishment of certain nuclear waste storage facilities in this State.*

A nuclear Store in SA is unnecessary. The Medical Association for Prevention of War [recommends](#):

- *an open and independent review of nuclear waste production and disposal in Australia, and*
- *progressing a shift to cyclotron rather than reactor-based production of isotopes for nuclear medicine as rapidly as feasible.*

Responsible nuclear waste management in Australia is a decision for a next federal government.

Required ARPANSA Licensing and federal EPBC Act environmental assessment of any proposed nuclear waste storage site in SA will run on long after the next federal election.

Federal Labor question double handling of nuclear waste & SA Labor oppose the process:

SA Labor passed a strong State Conference Motion "**No Nuclear Waste Dump for SA**" in Oct 2019. Deputy Leader Susan Close MP has [said](#) "We are utterly opposed to the (NRWMF) process" and stated in a Joint SA Labor Media Release "[Kimba site selection process flawed, waste dump plans must be scrapped](#)" (15 Sept 2020), that:

"This was a dreadful process from start to finish, resulting in fractures within the local community over the dump. ...

The SA ALP has committed to traditional owners having a right of veto over any nuclear waste sites, yet the federal government has shown no respect to the local Aboriginal people."

ALP Assistant Shadow Minister for the Environment Josh Wilson MP has [stated](#) in a speech "Social license missing from Coalition's nuclear push" to federal Parliament (11 June 2020):

*"But **where is the evidence that there is any problem with the intermediate-level waste staying where it is, as it should do, until the government of Australia identifies and resources an appropriate permanent disposal site for intermediate-level waste?** ...*

*But the claims that the government and government members in this place have made that intermediate-level storage needs to go to South Australia because there's no room for it and that there are health and safety concerns about where it is currently are rubbish. **And so it should stay where it is** as a spur to the government to get on with the process, which currently hasn't even started, of finding and resourcing a permanent-level disposal site. That is not occurring. ...*

*They need to immediately start and resource the process of a permanent disposal site for intermediate-level waste. **They should commit to maintaining that waste where it is currently stored...**"*
(Emphasis added)

ALP Senator Murray Watt stated in regard to a NRWMF Bill 2020 ([Hansard p.20-21, 21 June 2021](#)):

"... Labor will act in accordance with scientific evidence and with full transparency, broad public input and best-practice technical and consultative standards, taking into account the views of traditional owners, to progress responsible radioactive waste management. ...

***Labor is concerned that, to date, the government has been unable to provide any assurances on progress towards establishing a permanent facility for intermediate-level waste.** We note that the community will expect a clear plan for a permanent facility to safely secure intermediate waste. It is hard to understand why, to date, so few resources have been allocated to the creation of a permanent, intermediate-level waste storage facility.*

*In the absence of such resources or planning, **the government should explain why the existing intermediate-level waste should be moved from one temporary storage facility to another.** Labor will continue to hold the government to account and press for the department to explain how it plans to establish a permanent underground repository for waste of this nature."*
(Emphasis added)

Labor Premier Mike Rann successfully fought the Howard government over a federal nuclear waste dump and Premier Jay Weatherill committed in 2017-18 to an Indigenous right of veto over any federal nuclear waste dump siting on their lands in SA. **All South Australians have a right to a Say.**

For further info: see D Noonan's [input](#) to a current [federal PWC Inquiry](#) on ANSTO nuclear waste.