

Federal gov. names SA Ports to impose nuclear waste shipments

Nuclear Brief (1st August 2018) by David Noonan, *Independent Environment Campaigner*

Amidst rising controversy, the Federal Industry Department (DIIS) has named proposed Ports in SA that may have to take shipments of irradiated nuclear fuel wastes to go on to a Federal dump site.

[DIIS reports \(p.179\)](#) two intended shipments of reprocessed nuclear fuel wastes into SA within the first 2 years of operations of a proposed National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF).

A shipment of nuclear waste is due from Sellafield in UK and a shipment out of Port Kembla is planned from the ANSTO Lucas Heights reactor of nuclear waste received from France in 2015.

After years of secrecy over intended nuclear waste shipments to an SA Port, DIIS has now named Whyalla, Port Pirie, a new Eyre Peninsula commodities port (if built) and even Port Lincoln, as potential nuclear waste ports, in three "[Site Characterisation, Technical Reports](#)" released in July.

However, all of these ill-considered plans for nuclear waste ports face an array of serious obstacles.

These targeted port communities are denied a say in Minister Canavan's pending decision on siting a Federal dump in SA, they haven't been consulted on use of their ports, and are *excluded* from 'votes' in the Hawker & Kimba districts over Aug-Sept on whether or not to locate a NRWMF in those areas.

The Federal gov. is in continued breach of [advice of the Nuclear Safety Committee](#) (NSC) to the nuclear regulator ARPANSA (Nov 2016) on the NRWMF, on *transparency in decisions*, and for:

"The ongoing requirement to clearly and effectively engage all stakeholders, including those along transport routes." With the NSC stating that: "Such engagement is essential..."

[Proposed indefinite above ground storage](#) of nuclear fuel wastes *compromises safety*, is *illegal* in SA, and must not be allowed now. ARPANSA states these wastes require isolation for 10 000 years.

This was recognised by the previous SA State Liberal gov. that *prohibited* the import, transport, storage and disposal of nuclear fuel wastes under the *Nuclear Waste Storage (Prohibition) Act 2000*.

"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."

The new SA State Liberal gov. under the leadership of Premier Marshall has a key responsibility to protect the public interest and to uphold the law in our State. These are fundamentally State issues.

The Howard Federal gov. targeted SA for nuclear dumping over 1998 – 2004 but had to *abandon* that "National Store Project" & associated shipping and transport of nuclear waste across SA.

This Federal dump plan poses reputational risks and material impacts to the Kimba & Eyre Peninsula agricultural region, to the iconic Flinders Ranges tourism region, and now to targeted Ports in SA.

Nuclear waste can pose serious Accident & Security Risks and Impacts:

“In the event of a major nuclear accident, adverse impacts on the tourism, agriculture and property sectors could potentially be profound.”

SA Nuclear Royal Commission: *Tentative Findings, Risks and Challenges, [Impacts on other Sectors](#)* (Feb 2016, p.28)

Key questions on safety & security in nuclear fuel waste transport and storage remain unanswered (see [D Noonan submission to Senate Inquiry, p.10](#)). Nuclear fuel wastes must not be allowed into SA.

The UK Nuclear Free Local Authorities “[Briefing: Nuclear security concerns – how secure is the UK civil nuclear sector?](#)” (NFLA, May 2016) highlights key security threats including the risks from potential malicious attack on a nuclear waste transport or on a nuclear waste storage site.

NFLA (p.8) cites the views of nuclear engineer Dr John Large on safety as at the heart of its concerns:

“Movement of nuclear materials is inherently risky both in terms of severe accident and terrorist attack. Not all accident scenarios and accident severities can be foreseen; it is only possible to maintain a limited security cordon around the flask and its consignment; ... terrorists are able to seek out and exploit vulnerabilities in the transport arrangements and localities on the route; and emergency planning is difficult to maintain over the entire route.”

NFLA Recommendations (p.15) call for real discussion on the aftermath of a nuclear security incident given the major emergency response issues that arise. **SA is unprepared for any such consequences.**

Any use of SA Ports for nuclear waste poses significant logistical & other constraints:

The DIIS “*Site Characterisation, Technical Report - Wallerberdina*” for a proposed Federal nuclear dump site near Hawker, [Section 4.1 Transport \(p.174-186\)](#), at “*Proximity to Ports*” (p.177) states:

“There is potential to have waste shipped from Port Kembla, NSW to key port locations such as Whyalla and Port Pirie. From here waste would either be shipped via road or rail to the site.”

[Hundreds of Police were required for security](#) at July nuclear waste shipment [out of Port Kembla](#).

Use of Port Pirie to road would lock down the National Highway to Port Augusta with 130 tonne Nuclear Canisters on over dimension & over-mass special vehicles. To rail would require waste transfer onto national gauge alongside Port Pirie and a second transfer on to State gauge in Port Augusta, with rehabilitation of the disused Cotabena Railway (p.177 & 186), to go on to the Flinders.

Use of the Port of Whyalla to road would require upgrade of Yorkeys Crossing to bypass the Port Augusta Bridge and to try “*to avoid occurrences of complete shutdown*” (p.181) in Port Augusta.

The Iron Triangle cities of Whyalla, Port Augusta and Port Pirie are now openly targeted for nuclear fuel waste transport and should have a right to refuse these *untenable* Federal gov. nuclear plans.

Influential Port Lincoln may be able to defend itself: other Port communities shouldn't have to do so.

The Marshall gov must protect all SA regional communities and reject a Federal nuclear dump in SA.