



Kurna Submission to the Royal Commission

1. Introduction

The Kurna people are the traditional owners of the Adelaide Plains region of South Australia. The Kurna people have been uniquely displaced on their own land. Colonisation caused Kurna to become an impoverished people in a capital city. This has caused many direct and indirect impacts. Kurna people have language and culture but little recognition.

Kurna people wish to be properly recognised as the traditional owners of the Adelaide Plains and given the opportunity to have a proper conversation with the South Australian Government regarding South Australia's potential to become further involved with the nuclear fuel cycle.

Kurna wish to make clear that in the case of uranium mining and enrichment, nuclear energy production and waste disposal, many issues regarding culture and country arise.

Recognition of Native Title, while important, is a separate issue in this regard. Kurna, and indeed all Aboriginal culture, has been flourishing for much longer than the existence of Native Title rights. Culture is about connection to land, sea and air.

Culture is about not doing harm to self, country, water or air. Culture was around long before settlement.

The mining and enrichment of uranium, nuclear fuel generation and the storage of nuclear waste all have a grave effect on Aboriginal culture; past, present and future. Kurna wish to have a conversation with the Royal Commission which reflects this fact. Kurna wish to be consulted and involved in the Royal Commission process by giving direct, verbal evidence and allowing sufficient time for discussion of all issues.

2. The Issues Papers

(i) Exploration, Extraction and Mining

Kurna do not support further exploration, extraction and mining of uranium. Aboriginal people have always understood that uranium should be left alone; long before western science understood its dangers. Kurna are concerned that further involvement in the nuclear fuel cycle has the potential to divide Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people do not want greater extraction of uranium mining on country. This is bad stuff and should be left in the ground. These sorts of activities prey on vulnerable members of the community by offering large monetary compensations. It ignores those who are concerned with culture and heritage.

(ii) Further Processing and Manufacturing

Kurna do not support processing or manufacturing of uranium. While it is unlikely that any direct infrastructure will be on Kurna land, indirect effects must still be recognised. Already, there is transport from mining activities on Kurna country, yet Kurna are not consulted about this or compensated for the use of their land. Kurna people have not even been consulted about the low level medical waste that is already being stored on their land. Many other people, including other displaced Aboriginal people, all use Kurna land and waters, yet Kurna are still not properly recognised or remunerated.

It is an insult for everyone to do business on Kurna land without consultation or compensation. Even with mining activities that take place in remote South Australia; much of the business side is still conducted on Kurna land. Everyone uses and benefits from Kurna land yet Kurna do not get the enjoyment of our own land. Instead Kurna are forced to pick up the pieces. Kurna people are consistently put to one side.

Aboriginal people do not want processing or manufacturing of uranium products to take place on their sacred land. There is still much trauma in the Aboriginal community over the British testing of nuclear weapons. Many old people lived through this time. Many of us grew up hearing stories of the black mist which killed so many of our people.

(iii) Electricity Generation

Kurna do not support electricity generation from nuclear reactors. Using nuclear generators to produce electricity should not be allowed when there are much safer, and cheaper, alternatives available such as sun and wind power. The risks to human health and the economy are not worth it. Nuclear power will never be completely safe; it is not physically possible. There is always room for human error. All it takes is one bad incident. There is too much at stake and the risk of harm, even if small, has the potential to be devastating for human health, the environment and the economy. Generating nuclear energy will also produce more nuclear waste which must then be stored somewhere, most likely on Aboriginal land.

(iv) Management, Storage and Disposal of Waste

Kurna do not support storage or disposal of nuclear waste in South Australia. Kurna are very concerned about the consequences for future generations should nuclear waste be stored in South Australia. How can future generations be asked to watch over it? Transporting and storing nuclear waste is a big issue for Kurna and all Aboriginal people. Nuclear waste has the potential to be very dangerous. Over long periods of time it is impossible to say if any particular location will stay geologically stable. The timeframes for storage of nuclear waste are almost incomprehensible. It is irresponsible to leave this legacy to future generations. It is uncertain how you would even communicate that there is dangerous nuclear waste in a certain location over such long periods of time. The renewable energy sector should be developed instead. Renewables provide safe, clean sources of energy and afford many people with jobs. Renewable energy is thus a long term economically stable option. Kurna people do not wish to have their traditional land become a nuclear state. Kurna have cooperated with the construction of wind turbines near their heritage and cultural sites.

3. Consultation and Process

Kurna wish to be represented in State Government decision making processes such as the Regional Authority. The effects of colonisation have left a legacy of European infrastructure within which everyone must operate. Current governance arrangements essentially leave out traditional owners from the decision making process. This means that when organisations such as the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission are set up, the outcomes of which have the potential to affect Kurna and all Aboriginal people in South Australia, there is very little that traditional owners can do to have their voices heard. 'Consultation' is conducted in a European manner; it does not represent cultural protocols. Many of our people do not have access to computers and the internet. It is very upsetting and insulting to turn up to an information session for Kurna on the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission (after having attended four funerals in one week) and not even be provided with a copy of the terms of reference. Even if proper 'consultation' does take place, traditional owners have no real power to veto unnecessary, costly and potentially dangerous practices on their land. This needs to change. There also needs to be consultation with some of the young people as they will be most affected.

4. Attendance

Kurna wish to give direct evidence to the Nuclear Fuel Royal Commission. Consultation should take place on country in a culturally appropriate manner. Kurna would like the opportunity to have an open and honest conversation regarding South Australia's potential to become further involved in the nuclear fuel cycle. Kurna would like to understand the reasons why South Australia would want to become further involved in processes that are unnecessary, potentially dangerous, and economically risky. Uranium extraction does damage to self, culture and country, electricity generation from nuclear reactors could be devastating for human health, the environment and the economy and storage of waste places unfair burdens on future generations. Why would South Australia want to become further involved in this industry when there are much safer alternatives available for people, the environment, country, culture and the economy?