



Catholic Religious South Australia

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Catholic Religious SA

Response to the nuclear fuel cycle Royal Commission's 'Tentative Findings'

Catholic Religious SA (CRSA) comprises representatives of religious congregations of women and men who live and work in South Australia. Numbers of these congregations also have communities in other Australian states and territories. The congregations are engaged in education, health care, social justice advocacy, Catholic parish leadership, parish pastoral work and spiritual formation. CRSA is represented on the South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools and on the National Council of Catholic Religious Australia.

Introduction: Catholic Religious South Australia (CRSA) welcomes the opportunity to make a brief response to the 'Tentative Findings' of the nuclear fuel cycle Royal Commission.

We note with some dismay the Royal Commission's proposal for the SA Government to proceed with the plan to import high-level radioactive waste into our state of South Australia. As a group historically very much involved with generations of young South Australians, CRSA is extremely concerned at the burden and risk this project would impose on future generations, both financially and physically.

As a forward looking group of both long term South Australians and members who are working in our state, we urge far more positive solutions to the search for employment opportunities within South Australia rather than the acknowledged dangers of dealing with the world's high level radioactive waste, the toxicity of which will last for an unimaginable 200, 000 years.

CRSA notes with appreciation the advanced progress already made in the alternative energy sector over 40% of our SA electricity is now sourced from this safe industry. We urge also that the focus be on other current strengths of the state - in the food, wine, tourism, arts and entertainment industries. Many of our members delight to live in the capital city of Adelaide which has been listed as one of the world's most liveable cities. We urge our state government not to jeopardise any of these strengths of both reality and perception by accepting this present recommendation of the nuclear cycle Royal Commission.

We make the following brief Responses to particular paragraphs of the Tentative Findings as requested by the Commission:

74. There is international consensus that geological disposal is the best technical solution for the disposal of used fuel. Two countries, Finland and Sweden, have successfully developed long-term domestic solution...

We remind the Commission and the SA Government to make perfectly clear to the SA population that there is actually no such facility yet in operation and that the repositories in the countries named above will not be operating till ‘*early in the next decade.*’ Our members view with concern that in fact there is no geological disposal site currently operating anywhere in the world including within well off and experienced nations like the United States.

103. Both social consent and community consent must be obtained for any new nuclear activity to commence in South Australia.

CRSA members concur with this basic democratic principle – particularly when what is at stake is the well being of the lands, groundwaters and human health of South Australian and indeed, Australian citizens, now and for future generations forever. Our own Response makes clear our responsible non-consent for such activity.

110. Applied to the SA context, the impact of atomic weapons testing at Maralinga in the 1950s and 1960s remains significant for many people...

112. The Commission has received many submissions that underscore the deep connection that Aboriginal people have with the land and their responsibility for its care. That strong relationship with land is central to the way that Aboriginal South Australians have considered projects, including proposed nuclear activities. It is critical that a proponent of any nuclear project understands and respects that connection.

CRSA expresses its own concerns that Aboriginal communities in South Australia are particularly vulnerable to being selected for siting the world’s dangerously toxic radioactive waste. As the Commission acknowledges, the British nuclear tests of the 1950s and 1960s have wreaked havoc on Aboriginal communities and lands with so many Aboriginal individuals affected, particularly those of the Communities of Yalata and Oak Valley (Maralinga Lands)

We suggest to the Commission and further, to the SA Government whose responsibility it will be to negotiate a particular site, that acknowledging Aboriginal peoples’ ‘*strong relationship to the land*’ must be more than words. We are uneasy that mere acknowledgement, polite negotiating skills and the promise of ready money to under-funded Communities may exert unfair pressure to expose their lands and community members to such risks now and for countless generations to come.

122. The more significant radiation risks are created in the event of an uncontrolled release of nuclear or radioactive material, for example, in the event of an accident at a nuclear power plant such as occurred at Chernobyl in 1986 and Fukushima Daiichi in 2011...

We simply summarise what could be an extensive reply. ‘The nuclear industry worldwide has a long and well-documented record of errors and accidents leading to toxicity to humans and to the environment. ‘(Medical Association for the Prevention of War MAPW 10/2/16).

Post Fukushima, we are more conscious that ‘radioactive waste energy can cause cancer which may only grow many years after exposure.’ (Public Health Association of Australia.)

133-138 regarding *Transport issues*

We are concerned at the obvious dangers of transporting overseas high-level radioactive waste into our state and country.

Conclusion Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’* has been acclaimed throughout the world including from noted scientists and environmental experts. These values of respect for human life and the earth’s lands, waters and entire environment are values that our members likewise hold.

Catholic Religious SA urges the Royal Commission to convey to the SA Government this deep concern of many South Australians – of the reality, not just the perception, of the risk of importing high level radioactive waste.

CRSA sees its own opposition as a duty

Thank you for receiving our Response

(Sister) Bernadette Kiley OP

on behalf of the members of Catholic Religious Australia

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