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Wisdom from the oldest culture in the world

Opposition to National Radioactive Waste Repository being located at Billa Kalina, in Lake Eyre basin.

We Arabunna People are outraged, fuming, that the government wants to dump its radioactive waste on this area it calls the Billa Kalina Region. We oppose this project outright. We are putting you on notice, directing you, telling you, "Do not dump that radioactive waste on any of our land. Do not turn Lake Eyre into a sacrificial area for the nuclear industry's poisonous waste. Do not keep exposing our people to the harmful radiation. Do not destroy another sacred site."

In the past we were forced to leave our lands by the killing mobs who massacred our countrymen, our mothers and our little children. The racist system forced our Old People to leave so a few of us would survive. You see our lands as remote just like your principle of law terra nullius. This is not an uninhabited wasteland for your waste. It is our home. We became refugees but always maintained contact with our country. That is only temporary and now we need to have our land back, so we can look after it the proper way and heal ourselves. We plan to go back there and take away the evil. We have to go back whether the land has been poisoned or not. We've got nowhere else to go. Our life exists with our land. It is our foundation. It is our past, present and future. Our lands are sacred.

We realise you really want to desecrate another sacred site and kill our Lake Eyre, sacrifice it and its region for the greed that this industry has generated. It is an area of international significance, with creatures and plants unknown anywhere else in the world. There should be no dumping of radioactive waste, no mining whatsoever in Lake Eyre and the surrounding region and no more pumping from the underground water, fossil water that is millions of years old. It should be totally protected and made a World Heritage Area. We can't believe that the Government would choose to destroy such a place of significance to Aboriginal culture.

None of our lands should have been developed. Our people never mined or developed our lands in the colonists' way. We've never dug big holes in the ground,

or poisoned the waterways. Our culture teaches us to care for the land, our mother. We've never been pressured the way you pressure us now. We lived as one family and we looked after each other the way we looked after the land. Why pollute our still pure country?

It all comes back to the uranium. We always warned you to leave it where it was in its natural state, where it was safe in the ground. It was more value to all generations to worship it in a spiritual sense as a sacred site. Our stories teach us of its dangerous energy. Now we're all left with your waste, and you don't know what to do with it. You want to save a bit of money and just dump it on our land, destroy another sacred place, to try and make it safe, for you. You don't care about us. You don't care that we carry the wisdom of the oldest culture in the world. You know also, as we do, it's impossible to make it safe, that's why you want to turn Lake Eyre basin into a sacrificial zone. Our land is too ancient to be sacrificed. Our landscapes are so ancient and our soils so old and still in the pure form. Our land is very stable, free from earthquakes and well below sea level. We believe this is why you've chosen Billa Kalina, so that the escaping radon gas or the daughter gases and radioactive dust and waste will be contained in the Lake Eyre basin. The radioactive gas is heavy and rolls along the ground and would collect on Lake Eyre, but we've already seen how the winds have blown the radiation clouds across the country when you tested the nuclear bombs at Maralinga. We know how the radioactive isotopes are spread through the web of life and concentrated in the chain of life, causing cancers, leukemia and mutations in the animals and plants. We've already seen kangaroos hopping around blind with big lumps hanging off them. To us, kangaroos are an indicator. When the kangaroos are sick its a sure sign the country is sick. If the nuclear waste dump is without risk you would build several of them in your cities and save the cost of transport to a remote area. You would dump it where you dump your rubbish.

We understand governments, and how they work for the economy, like the mining companies. We know how they link together. We know their development games. It is a sickness that you are creating. The human race doesn't have the means to handle this uranium and its waste. It's like a new killer disease, and the world hasn't got the knowledge to heal it. This is an evil genocidal thing that is destroying this land. It is a foolish, blind approach by all of the parties involved. We know you are saying the storage area will only be the size of a soccer field but we also know that it would be the foot in the door and open up the area for expansion later on, even becoming a waste dump for other country's radioactive waste. We also know that the leakage from the dump has the potential to contaminate vast areas over time. Your time frame is 100 years of direct care of the waste dump, and you expect the life of the dump to be a minimum of 300 years. You don't expect the structure of the waste dump to last more that 1000 years yet you are talking about storage of spent fuel rods and radium which will continue to emit harmful radiation long after the building has crumbled. We come from too far, we have been on this land for too long to let this madness happen.

We have come to understand this nuclear sickness. We know the damage to humans, the increases in health problems, the frictions between people and Peoples. We know it as racism when you rip it from our lands, or bomb Aboriginal people with it, or dump it in our lands. It is destroying the basis of peace between people. We are striving for peace and you want to dump this on us.

We have to look ahead to future generations and protect them from the time when the steel containers of radioactive waste have rusted holes and concrete containers crumble and leak the toxic waste. There is no safe dose of nuclear radiation.

First you dug the uranium and bombed Aboriginal people at Maralinga with it and the radiation sickness killed and maimed people across a huge area. We fought the Roxby mine, (you call it the Olympic mine at Roxby Downs), but you mined it anyway. Now you are expanding Roxby and Ranger, and you want to mine Jabaluka as well.

The uranium mining industry and its related activities are clear cases of environmental vandalism, wanton destruction. The Roxby mine is now draining 5.4 million litres of fossil water a day from the Artesian basin to wash the yellow cake. The water is millions of years old and our world heritage mound springs are drying up, at least one has ceased to flow. These springs are an indication of what is happening to the underground water supply. Also at Roxby the toxic waters in the tailings lake ate away the limestone underneath and the contaminated waters leaked into the ground for two years before anything was done about it. How can we ever trust your ways of handling the waste? We are totally against the whole thing. Why are you still not listening? With such a woeful record of environmental mismanagement why is Roxby expanding and new mines going ahead? Why hasn't it been banned years ago? Why are you still dumping your waste on others? You now want to dump your waste in the area you call Billa Kalina as well. Once you start you would also bring the world's waste to our country once the door was opened. It's like saying you are going to build a safe pond and it ends up a lake which leaks radioactive water back into the artesian basin.

We remind you that the development of Roxby Downs brought this sickness to our country. It has brought nothing but problems, with our people, and the destruction of our lands. You boast about your community consultation but we know how our people have been manipulated, bribed, tricked and contracts signed under duress without even a translation into our own language. This sets up a terrible division amongst us all over your greed and these development issues. We have seen how the mining companies set up a rival land councils to counter the claims of the rightful authority for the country. We call them the 'rent a crowd mob'. This has caused so much tension in communities that we are living in a pressure cooker situation. Lives are being lost. You don't even know what sacrifice, loss and misery you've caused us. People are getting sick, as well as the animals, from the tailings and gases. They've never tested the people for radiation. You've virtually got to dig up the people to prove the damage it's done, but we would never allow that to

happen. Some of our animals are already showing signs of cancer, blindness. There needs to be a moratorium on the nuclear industry until this mess is sorted out.

Now we are expected to take back your toxic waste. This waste which has done all these terrible things to people and lands, would now do terrible things to us. Billa Kalina is not a remote and unused area to us. It is our home. It has always been used as a cultural place and will continue to be used by the Peoples coming through. We can no longer be sacrificed. You must not create a situation where we will still be treated as Fourth World Peoples against United Nations standards on health, safety self-determination and right to life.

That waste could blow because it's hot. The poison gas could get out. Sometimes you encase it in lead or concrete, but in the end it just gets out. The gas and radiation can't be contained. It's like those wave bombs that kill by the pressure, even through concrete. The pressure gets out. If the gas comes your way you just breathe it in. It goes straight inside your body and it does all these terrible things to you. It would linger like an ongoing cancer, or an AID's virus, that just chokes the life out of you. You don't yet know the full effects.

The responsibility lies with those who used and use the uranium, who benefited from it or caused it to be used. It must stay with them to keep it safely where it was used, and to find a way to deal with it safely. If it was good enough to use the first time they can keep it there.

We are part of the global alliance against uranium mining. We are totally opposed to the uranium mines, the reactors, the depleted uranium bullets and nuclear bombs, and the radioactive waste. We don't accept this sickness of yours, and we've only now got the voice to say it. We couldn't say it before, we would have been shot. It was only those who got away who got to tell the story. It's only now that we've got a voice to say: "Brother you're wrong. You can't build this world with racism, this nuclear sickness, and destruction of lands."

We Arabunna people opposed Roxby Downs since the beginning and we oppose it still. Our opposition is yet to be addressed. We have always demanded and we demand and seek now a full State and Senate inquiry into the whole existence of the Roxby project. We are pursuing all possible actions against Roxby. Now we will be pursuing all possible actions, national and international, against this nuclear waste dump. We will contest oppose, and expose all those who make this dumping possible. This includes Governments at all levels, companies and their directors and shareholders, as well as other unauthorized bodies and people.

We call on all people, and all beneficiaries of this sickness, to discard their economical religion of money. It is a religion still new to the Aboriginal people. Find natural ways of energy and medicine, and the other things it is used for. Find ways that aren't at the cost of our People and the land.

We call on all the people of South Australia, as well as of Australia and all people of the world to look seriously at the whole nuclear sickness. We call on them to use a bit of common sense and think seriously about the future. Do you want to be the world's supplier of uranium, responsible for the accidents and the bombs and nuclear war? Do you want to be the world's nuclear waste dump? Wake up Australia, and stop being conned. You were conned into having nuclear bombs tested in Australia. The human toll in death, cancer and sickness has never been counted. We've done all of this talking about the uranium before, 18-20 years ago. Half of the campaigners, black as well as white, are dead now.

This is a new round and I'm starting again, but the only place to beat it is here at the parliament, where they make the legislation that allows this evil to happen. It is the State and Federal Governments that cause this with their legislation and if the MAI (Multinational Agreement on Investment) treaty is agreed to by Australia the multinationals will over-ride any legislation. As ineffective as minimum standards are, any protection that they provide against this evil will no longer apply if the MAI treaty is agreed to. International environmental treaties will also be over-ridden by the MAI treaty. Multinational corporations will be able to over-ride governments' legislation. Transnationals will have power equal or greater than that of States. The executive arm of government can sign the MAI treaty without putting it through the parliament for open debate. It is another evil. It is the multinational corporations that cause this with their greed to make profit from uranium and the nuclear industry. It is the shareholders in companies like Western Mining that cause this because they are hungry for big returns on their investments. It is the banks and the churches, among others, who are also responsible because they are major shareholders in companies like Western Mining. It is so many of the newcomers to this land who are responsible because they support the major banks and the imported churches. There are so many links back to the original problem. Sacred sites should not have been desecrated. Uranium should have been left in the ground. How could you do this? We are striving for peace and you do this. Government, the Crown, does not care about the people and especially our People and our neighbours.

We are Sovereign People who own the land. We have never given our land away. Most of Billa Kalina Region is Arabunna lands. Our Sovereignty cannot be extinguished. We will always be the carers and owners of our country. You say that Billa Kalina meets all your selection criteria for a radioactive waste dump site but this is not true. You say 'the site should be located in an area where land ownership rights and control could put into question the retention of long-term control over the repository.' But Billa Kalina is a pastoral lease and the whole native title, Mabo and Wik debate highlights just how insecure land tenure is on these pastoral leases. Our land was taken by massacre and displacement. No treaties were signed. We have never ceded our sovereignty. Our sovereignty cannot be extinguished. Under international law we still own the land and will always oppose the radioactive waste dump.

We, Aboriginal people, own the key to survival on this land. We are the authority of this country. We call on all decent Australians to take notice of what we are saying. The Old Country is angry. It is talking, "Be aware!" It has seen the people come and go. It has seen your evils. It sees your evils. We say: No, No, No, No, No to your radioactive waste dump.

Our people and our ancient country, Lake Eyre, are about to retaliate against this evil force, to stop us and our lands from being sacrificed. We will unleash energy and power that cannot be imagined by the human mind to stop this evil force.

We are saddened that the foreigners to this land are still ignoring our rightful authority. There is a breakdown in communication and understanding. They don't understand what this Old Country and the people are saying. If those who are causing the troubles will not listen to our warnings, then we are peacefully asking them to leave our country, our people, and to go back to where they belong.

The time has come for all Australian people, if we are going to move forward, to do it without the Government, and to make our own governing bodies. We need to get rid of the way these things are done. Destroy this evil government. Dissolve this Parliament, the Crown. Dissolve it completely, it doesn't fit in this land. Discard this artificial economy and legislation of cruel evil projects. Discard this culture of death and worship of war and greed. We have to maintain our old values that have been tried and tested over thousands of years. We can guide you in creating a culture based on peace making, caring and sharing, and healing the land and the people. There is too much at stake and we hold the key to survival. Listen to us and respect what you hear. Commit to peace not war.

We are letting you know that we are doing this submission with very little resources. We do not receive any finance for this from ATSIC or the Land Council. It is done under extreme duress, even having to talk about and respond to these issues brings on for us a very big grieving and sorry business process because of its importance and its grave seriousness.

We are the people who can properly talk about the Law for this place, for this country. We are the ones able to speak and negotiate a peaceful process to resolve this sorry business of invoking death you have started. You expect us to frame our response in a scientific analytical way, but this is not possible because our people are so connected to the land. If we have to we will organise a meeting, under duress, of central and surrounding Peoples, all our Old People and Elders who have the authority and can vouch for the importance of this country and the need to leave it alone.