



Northern Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

Statehood set back over radioactive waste facility

21 October 2005

The Full Council of the Northern Land Council has called for an amendment to the *Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005* so that a Land Council can nominate an alternative site in the Northern Territory for a waste facility - provided that the traditional owners agree and sacred site and environmental issues continue to be protected under current legislation.

"The Full Council has rejected the Chief Minister's position that this is a Statehood issue," NLC Chairman, John Daly said.

"The storage of radioactive waste from medical treatment is clearly a matter of national importance.

"The Chief Minister knows full well that a waste facility may be safely built in some parts of the Northern Territory - but carefully says nothing about this issue," Mr Daly said.

"Low and intermediate radioactive waste facilities already exist in many locations throughout the world - including Western Australia.

"The Chief Minister also knows full well that 400,000 Australians receive radioactive medical treatment every year, and the small amount of waste generated should be stored safely in a secure national repository - not in hospital basements or shipping containers in over 100 different locations in Australia," Mr Daly said.

"The Chief Minister's position is irresponsible, irrelevant, and an abject failure of leadership.

"This dismal performance can only damage the position of traditional owners in remote locations who may welcome development and seek outcomes which benefit all Australians", Mr Daly said.

"Improving the lot of remote communities and advancing the Territory requires long term vision, not scaremongering and short term political games," Mr Daly said.

NLC Chief Executive, Norman Fry, said; "The Chief Minister has set back Statehood for decades by playing short term politics with the national interest."

"The truth is Statehood has to be earned by long term responsible government.

"Under Clare Martin the NT Government has already given up power regarding uranium mining, and now is irrelevant regarding the waste facility," Mr Fry said.

"The Chief Minister has led her party, and the Parliament, into irrelevancy.

"Territorians can kiss Statehood goodbye while Clare Martin is Chief Minister," Mr Fry said.

The full text of the NLC Full Council's resolution is as follows:

“The Northern Land Council supports an amendment to the *Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005* to enable a Land Council to nominate a site in the Northern Territory as a radioactive waste facility, provided that:

- (i) the traditional owners of the site agree;
- (ii) sacred sites and heritage are protected (including under current Commonwealth and NT legislation);
- (iii) environment protection requirements are met (including under current Commonwealth and NT legislation);
- (iv) Aboriginal land is not acquired or native title extinguished (unless with the traditional owners' consent).”

The Full Council's resolution was made on 20 October 2005 at its meeting conducted at Crab Claw Island at Bynoe Harbour to the west of Darwin.