

Media Release - For Immediate Release
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‘Justice has prevailed’: Muckaty nuclear waste plan finally dumped.

Traditional Owners and campaigners are celebrating today after learning that plans for a national nuclear waste dump at Muckaty in the Northern Territory have been scrapped.

The Commonwealth Government has committed to not pursue the proposed Muckaty site, the announcement coming mid-way through a federal court trial examining the site nomination process¹.

A delegation of Traditional Owners has travelled from Tennant Creek to speak with supporters and media in Alice Springs.

Marlene Nungarrayi Bennett, Warlmanpa woman said, “Today will go down in the history books of Indigenous Australia on par with the Wave Hill Walk-off, Mabo and Blue Mud Bay. The Warlmanpa Nation has won an eight-year battle against the might and power of the Commonwealth Government and Northern Land Council. Justice has prevailed and this is a win for all Territorians.”

Penny Williams Namikilli said “ngulayilpa wanganya ngurru-ku partta-wurru mar-darn-jaku marjumarju kula yanjaku. kuyayi ngurru kirlka kan-jin-mi ,mayi parnta.”
[Translated from Warlmanpa: We talked about our land to keep the waste away off the land, not to put it there. We want it to remain clean with bush tucker.]

Milwayi Traditional Owner Gladys Nungarrayi Brown said, “The land is important, we have to keep it clean without radioactive waste. Our ancestors walked around that land and were always looking after it- generation after generation they kept handing that knowledge on. We have to keep passing on that knowledge to future generations.”

The Commonwealth government announced in 2005 that it would pursue three sites in the Northern Territory for a national dump, passing legislation to override NT government opposition. Amendments made in 2006 allowed additional site nominations from Aboriginal Land Councils.

The Northern Land Council offered Muckaty for assessment in 2007, despite opposition from many Traditional Owners. A determined community campaign gained support from trade unions, public health and human rights organisations around the country. Annual demonstrations in Tennant Creek pledged direct action against any attempts to build the dump.

Beyond Nuclear Initiative convenor Natalie Wasley said “Next month will mark ten years since the SA nuclear dump plan was stopped by the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta and supporters. Any further attempts to impose nuclear waste on Aboriginal people considered politically expendable will be defeated.”

¹ A federal court action lodged in 2010 began went to trial on June 2, with hearings in Melbourne and Tennant Creek. The hearing scheduled for Darwin has now been vacated.

Dianne Stokes, Milwayi kurtungurlu and Yapa Yapa kirtta said, “We will be still talking about our story in the communities up north so no one else has to go through this. We want to let the whole world know that we stood up very strong. We want to thank the supporters around the world that stood behind us and made us feel strong.”

Kylie Sambo, Milwayi Kurtungurlu and hip-hop artists said, “I joined the campaign four years ago when I wrote my hip hop song *Muckaty*. My sister always told me stories about our mothers dreaming, where it traveled to and from. That land means a lot to us, that's why we stand up to protect it. My sister always encouraged me to stand up for our people and our country, my uncle and grandfather would be very happy and proud of what we have done. We are in Alice Springs with good news that we have WON the fight, If you think something is not going the right way then you stand up and speak, because if we in the centre of the Northern Territory can stand up and win then so can you.”

Court proceedings in Melbourne revealed that compensation for the radioactive dump would be in the form of roads, houses and education scholarships. This funding is desperately needed in the region, with a recent estimate that Tennant Creek alone needs around 400 houses to meet current demand.

Ms Wasley concluded, “This radioactive ransom must end. We call for the repeal of the National Radioactive Waste Management Act, which explicitly targets Aboriginal Land for a waste dump. It is time for a national commission to examine radioactive waste production and all options for management.”

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