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NEW ORGANISATIONS WILL EDUCATE AUSTRALIANS ABOUT HEALTH RISKS OF NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE!

People for a Nuclear-Free Australia (PNFA) has been formed in response to disturbing news that the Howard Government has developed an unbounded enthusiasm for Australia to become a major player in the nuclear power and nuclear waste arena on a global scale.

Dr David Suzuki is **PNFA's** Patron, and musician John Butler recently invited **PNFA** Spokesperson Dr Helen Caldicott to speak at his Sydney concerts to help stimulate the nuclear debate in Australia.

There has been very little information about the medical risks of nuclear power and nuclear waste in the Australian media to date. The nuclear fuel cycle – uranium mining, nuclear power generation and nuclear waste, are embedded with many medical hazards. This fundamentally carcinogenic industry will induce cancer and genetic disease in this and all future generations, while it generates electricity for only 30 to 40 years.

Over 80,000 tonnes of highly radioactive nuclear waste in the United States and Europe awaits transportation to a storage facility yet to be found. Australia has been identified as one place to ship this nuclear waste. Ominously, the Liberal party voted in June to support the storage of foreign nuclear waste in Australia. This fits perfectly with two recent developments:

- Kellog, Brown and Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton, US Vice President Dick Cheney's former company helped to construct the railway line between Adelaide and Darwin, and Serco Asia Pacific, an international corporation that deals with nuclear waste management owns this rail line.
- The Northern Territory intervention enacted by the coalition has virtually nothing to do with child sexual abuse, but everything to do with uranium and nuclear waste. The Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007 enables the government to take control of Indigenous land and townships for a period of 5 years. Mining companies may now be able to move unimpeded into Aboriginal tribal land to dig up the uranium, and some of this land is seen by the coalition to be a perfect site for the storage of radioactive waste.

If high-level nuclear waste is stored in the Australian outback it will inevitably leak over time contaminating underground aquifers and food for ever more, inducing large numbers of cancers and genetic diseases in future generations of humans, animals and plants.

The Howard government is soon expected to announce Australia has become a member of George Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), a plan which entails 'trusted' countries like Australia enriching uranium, exporting the fuel rods for reactors overseas, then re-importing the high level very toxic radioactive waste, where it would either be stored in the desert for the next 500,000 years, or it will be reprocessed. Reprocessing is a very dangerous step of the nuclear fuel cycle, which involves chopping up the fuel rods, dissolving them in concentrated nitric acid, and removing the plutonium.

Plutonium has two main uses: it is the fuel for nuclear bombs (one millionth of a gram of plutonium if inhaled will induce lung cancer), and it can also be used as fresh fuel in nuclear reactors.

PNFA website www.nuclearfree.com.au is an excellent resource containing a large amount of information about the true costs and consequences of the nuclear power industry, including a series of comprehensive **Fact Sheets** about medical effects of the nuclear fuel chain, nuclear power and climate change, economic cost and renewable energy alternatives.

Sister organisation **Doctors for a Nuclear-Free Australia (DNFA)** to be announced soon.

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