



## Senator Lyn ALLISON

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Leader, Australian Democrats  
Co-chair, Parliamentarians for a Nuclear Free Future  
President, International Nuclear Test Network (Paris)

I am very pleased to have been invited to speak at this conference and to be back in Tahiti amongst so many friends and fellow advocates of the many people whose lives have been affected by testing the world's most devastating killing machines. It is good that France and other super nuclear powers are no longer testing their weapons but cold comfort given the fact that disarmament has stalled and there are as many nuclear weapons around the world now as there were when the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty was signed so many years ago.

Nuclear issues generally are very much in the news in Australia at present and, as the world faces the need to reduce greenhouse emissions by 60% by 2050 to avoid catastrophic climate change, the nuclear industry has taken the opportunity to re-invigorate falling interest in expanding nuclear power.

In my view this has implications for nuclear weapons proliferation. The conditions that applied to the export of Australia's uranium – 40% of the world's deposits – have been extremely weak and it is highly likely that our yellowcake is in the weapons threatening world peace. The uranium we are about to sell to China will at the very least, free up other fissile material for use in weapons. Mr Bush's decision this year to share nuclear technology with India – a nuclear weapons state that refuses to sign the NPT and the CTBT is a dangerous precedent that has seriously undermined the flagging NPT.

There is a real possibility that Japan, South Korea and perhaps Taiwan will soon build and test their own nuclear weapons. The lack of diplomacy over Iran's nuclear enrichment ambitions may well see them developing nuclear weapons and they will almost certainly want to test them. This is not a good time to flood the international market with uranium but that is the intention of the Australian government.

Those at this conference know well that the ones who suffer will not be those who want to develop this power. They will know that the governments that want that power cannot be relied upon to protect innocent people or their environment from the deadly fallout of those tests.

The battle for justice for nuclear test veterans continues in Australia but new issues have also emerged.



## Recent news on nuclear issues from Australia:

- A national nuclear waste repository is planned for remote Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory which will take both low level waste and the waste from our research reactor thousands of miles away. The NT Government opposes resisting the dump.
- A four-fold expansion in uranium mining is underway and an agreement to sell uranium has just been signed with China (China has not ratified the CTBT and neither has the UK, to whom we already export uranium)
- Our government is canvassing the prospect of enriching uranium and 'leasing' it to other countries, returning the waste to Australia for storage
- A Government inquiry has been set up to examine the viability of nuclear power compared to coal (not renewable)
- Our governments banned the use of depleted uranium from armaments 20 years ago but US troop exercises in Australia recently used them in pristine environments in north Queensland

## Maralinga Veterans study

After extensive pressure on the Government – through the parliament and the test veterans - a Nuclear Veterans' Cancer and Mortality study was set up in 1999 and the report has finally been released this week - 7 years later. The study was expected back in 2001 to cost \$1.2 million.

In the late 1990s controversy raged over the treatment of veterans and the discovery of documents showing how Australians were duped by the British and by their own Prime Minister.

The press also turned up death certificates showing that most of the 6000 servicemen who have died, died from cancer, leukaemia, heart failures or brain tumours and almost half were in their 40's and 50's.

Years were spent wrangling over the design of the cancer and mortality study:

- which test participants would be included – the study eventually excluded those who died before 1982 (30 years after the first test) on the basis that cancer takes many years to develop after exposure! (A Dept fact sheet says *compensation for leukaemia is only available if it developed within the first 25 years after exposure.*)
- what, if any, hospital test records would be used,
- whether the study would in fact have statistical power
- what cancers would be included (non-cancerous effects including auto-immune dysfunction and genetic problems were excluded).
- mistakes were made because no pilot study was done

Other problems included:

- The identification of those at risk will be based on incomplete and dose records. Alpha



and neutron dosages were not recorded and missing and misleading gamma and beta dosage information was received from the UK.

- 17,000 participants were initially identified but 8.5% - 934 - were not found and were highly likely to have died, significantly affecting the results
- The overall death rate for participants was shown to be slightly higher than for the general population but no attempt was made to take into account the healthy soldier effect
- The findings state that radiation is an established cause of leukaemia but say it might also be caused by benzene even though the necessary benzene exposure would have to be heavy and chronic for 5 years - alternative justifications for excess cancers - including smoking - were conveniently not fully researched and argued.

A Study Advisory Committee was appointed by the Minister for Veterans Affairs but the whole process was cloaked in secrecy and members forbidden to speak to others about its workings - one was threatened with legal action if she spoke to anyone outside the meetings on dosimetry. This stopped her seeking advice, particularly where practical knowledge was required.

The conclusions of the study were disputed by members of the Study Advisory Committee.

The study showed high numbers of radiogenic cancers but the report nonetheless concludes that the levels of radiation found in the dosimetry study were not high enough to initiate cancers

This is despite the fact that large excesses in cancer rates of up to 300% were found over a wide range of cancers, suggesting a common causative effect.

- Death from cancer was 18% higher than in the general population and incidence 23% higher
- Cancers of the lip, oral cavity and pharynx were 50% higher
- Lung cancer 20% higher, colorectal 24% and prostate 26% higher
- Cases of oesophageal cancer were 48% higher, melanoma 40%, leukaemia 43% and leukaemia other than chronic lymphatic leukaemia 61%

## Compensation for veterans

- 9 claims for a total of \$1,047,781 were paid to veterans for the effects of ionising radiation under the **Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act**. Only 8% of claims were successful under this law.
- **Common law actions.** 79 common law actions have been initiated by veterans and other workers, 70 withdrawn through death the determination of the Government to contest the cases. Very few applicants qualify for legal aid. Only four cases have come to trial and more than \$1 million was spent on legal fees fighting the only two claims that were successful. One of these received \$840,000 in compensation.



- An '**Act of Grace**' scheme allowed common law actions between 1988 and 1989 to be settled out of court
- A **Special Administrative Scheme** (now closed) was for those who developed multiple myeloma or leukaemia other than chronic lymphatic leukaemia within 25 years of participation in the tests

## **Maralinga cleanup**

A botched and inadequate cleanup at the site was conducted in 1999, costing \$108 million, largely funded by the UK

The British buried some of the radioactive cobalt and plutonium and capped the pits with concrete but the records of these pits were grossly inaccurate and a lot more contaminated material was left scattered over a wide area.

The men involved in disposing of contaminated material in the late 1960's did not wear protective clothing or respiratory equipment, unlike workers in this Maralinga cleanup.

But an explosion in one of the pits during the insitu vitrification process conveniently led to the abandonment of that process.

So highly plutonium-contaminated material has been buried in simple unlined trenches covered by a meter or two of earth.

Two large Maralinga sites used in the minor trials will not be cleaned up, remaining hazardous for 100,000 years.

## **Parliamentary work**

The Australian Parliament has Parliamentarians for a Nuclear Free Future, of which I am co-chair and a number of members and Senators are members of the Parliamentary Network for Nuclear Disarmament but we have not so far attracted a member of the government to join the group, a requirement for us to be a formal group under the PNND.

The group conducted a forum earlier year – Miracle or Meltdown – the Nuclear Debate – responding to Government moves to expand uranium mining, move to sell uranium to China and set up a repository in the NT.

I visited New York for the NPT review in May 2005 and have put forward regular motions and questions to the Minister on a variety of nuclear non-proliferation issues –

- progress (or lack of it) on disarmament,
- the NPT review,
- the proposed Nuclear Weapon Free Southern Hemisphere and Adjacent Areas Treaty,
- the CTBT verification regime, including an international monitoring system
- details of our nuclear waste storage



I urged the Government to consider establishing a Department of Peace within the Australian Government to:

- foster a culture of peace;
- research, articulate and help bring about non-violent solutions to conflicts at all levels; and
- provide resources for training in peace-building and conflict transformation to people everywhere.

Am awarding the first Australian Peace Prize next week to Helen Caldicott for her new book *Nuclear Power is not the answer to global warming or anything else*

I took part in an e-parliament in Washington on the weaponisation of space

### **The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty additional protocol**

I am strongly in favour of the additional protocol on the CTBT proposed at this conference but I note that it is almost 10 years ago that the US signed the treaty - the first country to sign - and that it was said to be the longest sought, hardest fought treaty in the history of arms control.

Vietnam this year became the 34<sup>th</sup> Annex 2 country to ratify the treaty but 10 more must do so before it comes into force.

The United States, China, North Korea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, Egypt and Columbia must be persuaded to ratify - a tall order by any measure, particularly when there appears to be little likelihood that the Bush Administration will ratify. The geopolitical situation may change and the US may see some advantages in ratifying but even if it does, India

I would expect that it would be equally difficult to reach agreement on this protocol, however, it is a very good opportunity for us to raise awareness of the need for both rehabilitation of sites and proper studies and compensation for civilians and military personnel engaged in military nuclear tests and the populations directly impacted by the fallout from the tests.

If the protocol is supported by the conference I will be pleased to take it up with the Australian Government and urge that we back the initiative.