

Supplementary
Submission
No 5a

**INQUIRY INTO URANIUM MINING AND NUCLEAR
FACILITIES (PROHIBITIONS) REPEAL BILL 2019**

Name: Mr Grant Mistler

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Partially
Confidential

14 October 2019

Dear NSW Parliamentary Research Service

Re: Issues Paper on Uranium Mining and Nuclear Energy in NSW

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission on the Issues Paper towards this Bill.

I enjoyed reading this Issues Paper very much, and I found it to be a very thorough and well organised conceptually. Perhaps the only missing item was the NSW township of Toongi, which currently has known uranium deposits also has a 'twin town' of Carcoar. Uranium deposits were first discovered at Carcoar in 1894, and the general public went fossicking for uranium in 1954 with their personal Geiger–Müller counters.

For this Issues Paper, I wish to address the questions on community engagement on page 125.

Question 15 What model of community engagement should be used to include the NSW public in decisions about uranium mining and nuclear energy?

Between 2009 and 2015, public polling by Essential Media Communications shows less than 40% of people are consistently against using nuclear power in Australia, and around 20% responded to the polling with "don't know".¹ This means the question about nuclear power has not been a galvanising topic in Australia, as there are one in five people (20%) who are flexible either way, and that can change in how any information is presented to them, how future public protests unfold, and how facts about best practice quality and safeguarding become muddled by foreign influence.

As a comparison, in 2018 I became intrigued by the small public protests surrounding the long consultation process and public design development of the Winney Bay Cliff Top Walk near Copacabana on the Central Coast of NSW. Along that cliff top each winter, some 20,000 people undertake the 5 Lands Walk in June, and many people also bushwalk in that area throughout the year, with whale watching being another significant drawcard to that tourist region.

The initial Winney Bay Cliff Top Walk proposal started in 2011 with community engagement, and the successful application for government funding to remediate dilapidated and degraded bushland area that used to be farming land, first owned by Mr Barker, and then purchased by his niece Janet Broadbridge in 1952. The successful application was to build a safer walking track similar to what is now enjoyed between Watsons Bay and Bondi on the Federation Cliff Walk. The Winney Bay Cliff Top Walk design has been in the planning stage for years with input and support from council staff,

¹ <https://www.essentialvision.com.au/?s=nuclear+power&searchbutton=Search>

the 5 Lands Walk Committee, the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, Regional Development Australia and of course the local community.

After the Central Coast Council re-exhibited the second stage of the project, and the extensive community consultation in late 2018, I lodged a GIPA request on 11 December 2018, and received the raw survey data from the online survey component of the community consultation. The “Winney Bay Cliff Top Walk Stage Two – Consultation Report November 2018” tabled at the council meeting on 10 December 2018 indicated odd data spreads to me. Further investigation with Central Coast Council showed that of the 209 “no votes”, two people were identified as having sent three surveys, and nine people were identified as having sent two surveys. This means there were only 188 individual “no votes”. Here, 11 (6%) of the 188 respondents sent multiple “no votes” online. This may mean there are more people who sent multiple “no votes” online by using multiple email

addresses or multiple names – as that is more difficult for the Central Coast Council to verify authenticity.

There was no way to filter out multiple online votes, and that wonky dataset caused confusion among the elected councillors at Central Coast Council. There were also some sort of logic errors evident within the online survey data – there were internal consistency errors at play. One logic error example was 54% of Copacabana residents supported “the inclusion of a bridge to achieve accessibility in the Stage Two Cliff Top Walk proposal”, but that then suddenly drops to 44% supporting the “Inclusion of a bridge to achieve appropriate gradient for wheelchair access”. This does not make logical sense – Copacabana residents want a bridge, but not for people in wheelchairs? My GIPA and communication regarding the Winney Bay Cliff Top Walk can be verified with the Central Coast Council if you wish.

My point here is that the community engagement was badly handled in response to a small few complainants who harassed the Central Coast Council in an organised campaign of misinformation between 2018 and 2019. That campaign of misinformation resulted in \$4.6 million of NSW State funding being withdrawn in September 2019, and there is now a disconnected staircase built in the middle of nowhere, with no funding to complete that Winney Bay Cliff Top Walk.

The lesson here is that something as simple as a cliff top walk that was under discussion and development for eight years mushroomed in to something unwieldy due to one main complainant, and the activation of people who were not from the Central Coast, people who were not from NSW and people who were not from Australia exerting unbalanced influence on that community engagement process. For this Issues Paper please consider how to engage bona fide residents of NSW in a representative manner, and how to filter out the multiple foreign influencers.

As one option, the Institute for Choice at the University of South Australia undertakes research in choice modelling in complex social and consumer issues where trade-offs must occur, and their research has investigated mathematical psychology, psychophysics, institutional distrust and risky choice. The Institute for Choice may be able to utilise the energy trilemma and the Finkel Review to undertake choice modelling with NSW residents to uncover hidden preferences. That is, what random people say in an online survey, and what NSW residents are actually willing to pay for in the future are two different realities, and the Institute for Choice has proven peer-reviewed methodologies.

Thank you again for inviting me to comment on the Issues Paper for this Bill. I look forward to receiving more progress reports on the Uranium Mining and Nuclear Facilities (Prohibitions) Repeal Bill 2019.

Yours faithfully

Grant Mistler

URANIUM SEEKERS INVADE CARCOAR

A Carcoar publican said yesterday that there were more Geiger counters than beer glasses on his bar.

The publican, Mr. Tom Hamilton, of the Royal Hotel, was describing the town's uranium rush.

The rush started after Tuesday's announcement that uranium had been found on the site of an old cobalt mine on property owned by Mr. L. S. Snider, M.L.C.

The Minister for Mines, Mr. W. M. Gollan, said the find was "the richest yet made in the State."

Mr. Hamilton said more uranium had been found yesterday morning.

"We don't know yet who found it or where," he said.

Mr. Hamilton said the prospectors, arriving hourly in the town, fell broadly into two types—those who displayed geiger counters and those who did not.

The "quieter, more subtle type," who seemed to be having most success, kept their geiger counters out of sight.

"They come in and quietly pal up with the old blokes who know the part," he said.

"After a while the old blokes will take them out in their Customlines and show them where to look for it."

Mr. Snider's property,

is about half a mile from the heart of the town.

Mr. I. J. Sinclair, a Carcoar storekeeper, said he had not been able to confirm yesterday's reported find.

Checks had been made at the nearest Court at Blayney, but no one had registered a find.

However, a prospector might travel a long distance before registering his find in order to "keep it dark."

Mr. N. Wilson, who did much of the field work leading up to the find on Mr. Snider's property, said there had been "very strong rumour" of a further find yesterday, but it had not been confirmed.

"There are plenty of places where it could be found," he said.

In Sydney last night Mr. Snider said there had been several approaches from people interested in developing the find on his property.

However, his group wanted the find to be properly investigated before any company was formed.

Swimmer Drowned

ADELAIDE, Saturday.—Graham Rowe, 18, of Glenside, was drowned in the River Torrens to-day. He was swimming when he disappeared. His body was recovered after 20 minutes.

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