

Peace File

WATER AND NUCLEAR POWER

The Prime Minister has now recognised climate change and global warming and wants 25 nuclear power stations to be built in Australia by 2050 to reduce emissions from greenhouse gases.

Nuclear power has never been safe, it is beset with problems, dangerous leaks, accidents, enormous amounts of radioactive waste that would have to be stored for thousands of years and no safe solution has yet been devised.

There is another problem – WATER. Australia has always been known as the driest continent, but now we are in drought conditions and predictions are that it will get worse. The report from Water Services Association of Australia predicts a 25% reduction in water yields from catchments.

NUCLEAR POWER GENERATION USES MORE WATER THAN ANY OTHER SOURCE OF POWER

- According to the United States NGO Power Scorecard, a nuclear power station uses 185 billion gallons of water a day.
- The Ranger mine at Kakadu National Park is in the monsoonal part of Australia. It has a long record of dangerous leaks and releases contaminated water into the wetlands. Aboriginal people living in the area have, according to a study by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, a 90% more chance of getting cancer than indigenous people elsewhere.
- The Olympic Dam mine in South Australia takes 33 million litres of water a day from the Great Artesian Basin and BHP Billiton wants to make a massive expansion of the mine which will increase the use of water five times.

Twenty-five nuclear power stations in operation by 2050 would produce only one third of our electricity needs.

WE NEED TO CURB GREENHOUSE GASES NOW. Wind farms, for instance, can be in operation in less than a year. One 200MW solar power station could provide electricity for 200,000 homes and save 900,000 tons of greenhouse gases a year.

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Even if there were no other arguments against nuclear power stations, on the water issue alone, it would be grossly irresponsible to continue to insist on this form of energy.