

Move this toxic waste not bury it, say residents groups

TWO Hunters Hill resident groups have blasted a Property NSW proposal to bury Nelson Parade's radioactive waste on site and under concrete.

The Nelson Parade Action Group and the Save Hunters Hill Municipality have described the proposal as outrageous and are furious Property NSW has given residents less than a month to put in submissions for or against it.

Both groups have urged Hunters Hill Council to lodge the strongest possible objection to the so called "concrete bunker" option and support what they say is the overwhelming objection of the great majority of Hunters Hill residents to any storage of the toxic waste on a residential street in their heritage municipality.

Despite government promises to remove the waste – which has been on site for almost a century – and a parliamentary enquiry finding the waste should be removed, Property NSW recently touted the controversial option for the contaminated site as the toxic waste is on land it owns.

Save Hunters Hill Municipality spokesperson Phil Jenkyn OAM said the concrete bunker option not only shows a blatant disregard for the safety of residents it also ignores the possibility that the waste could have shifted due to soil erosion and could be contaminating the nearby foreshore.

"We have also made it absolutely clear that they will not remove the stigma on the whole municipality of Hunters Hill

unless they remove the whole of the waste," he said.

"And I find it absolutely unbelievable they are not going to send it to the waste disposal site at Kemps Creek.

"We have gone through the worst nightmare you can imagine over this and what they are doing now is absolutely disgraceful."

Neither Mr Jenkyn or Ms Clark concede that burying the waste under concrete is a safe option, although some Nelson Parade residents believe it is.

"We have repeatedly asked for expert evidence that the radon gas will be safely and properly managed but they still provide no evidence in the plan," Ms Clark said.

No precedence for this plan can be found and there is no direct proof that their plan will work safely and properly.

"Even worse, sorting and consolidation of the contaminated soil elevates the level of radioactive material to be stored onsite which may prevent any permanent disposal except the pending national facility."

Public meetings at the Hunters Hill Town Hall have seen residents overwhelmingly call for the waste to be removed.

Property NSW has since resorted to smaller, restricted meetings at the Fairland Community Hall in Hunters Hill where bureaucrats have banned The Weekly Times on the

grounds that these meetings are only for residents in the close vicinity of Nelson Parade.

"They deliberately and actively cut The Weekly Times out in an act I can only describe as suspicious and unforgivable," Mr Jenkyn said.

"This is an issue that impacts on Hunters Hill and impacts on the whole of Hunters Hill and every resident has the right to be informed about what is going on through our local newspaper."

Nelson Parade Action Group President Philippa Clark agreed and noted that The Weekly Times did not get advertising notices about the latest proposal.

"If this proposal goes ahead it will be the first time in Australia that radioactive material is stored in a residential street, yet the only public notification is three small newspaper advertisements that could easily be missed," she said.

"Only the nearby residents have been told of this plan and the surrounding communities all impacted by this decision have been left in the dark."

Mr Jenkyn also accused Ryde MP Victor Dominello and Lane Cove MP Anthony Roberts of peddling "false hope" the waste would be removed.

"If it is that safe, take it to Parliament House and bury it under concrete there," he told a recent public meeting.

"The reason why the



The Weekly Times Managing Editor John F Booth is pictured with Nelson Parade Action Group supporters at a recent rally at the Hunters Hill Town Hall. TWT on-the-spot PHOTO

waste is not going to the Kemps Creek waste facility is a political one, because Kemps Creek is in a marginal electorate.

"And now the whole mess seems to be being handled by bureaucrats from one department with no involvement from the Department of the Environment or NSW Health or experts or scientists, which surely must be key stakeholders in such a serious public health issue."

Philippa Clark said the bureaucrats are well aware of community anger.

"We argued that suitable temporary off-site storage pending the establishment of the federal waste facility would be a much better solution

than the Government's proposal," she said.

"They have not actively pursued other alternative solutions, they have ignored our pleas."

The local activist has even spoken of how local parents have banned their children from playing in and around Nelson Parade as well as the impact the on site waste has had on homes right across the municipality.

"The stigma has led to teasing and embarrassment and homes are unsaleable with residents trapped unable to downsize."

Philippa Clark has urged the community to fight back.

"Hunters Hill Council has twice unanimously passed resolutions that

all contaminated material should be completely removed from the site," she said.

"Now it is this community's turn to stand up and fight for the removal of this hazardous waste to a safe non-residential storage facility."

Ms Clark also evoked the ghosts of battles past.

"The celebrated Battlers of Kelly's Bush would be horrified to learn of the proposal to concentrate and encapsulate radioactive waste in adjacent Nelson Parade," she said.

"They didn't stand for the Governments short-sightedness and ineptitude and fought to provide an enhanced environment that they and

future generations could be proud of.

"No we have a government breaking repeated promises to remove all contamination, which it made after the 2008 Parliamentary Inquiry and has repeated to the Hunters Hill residents many times.

"The complete mismanagement of this issue for 100 years undermines any trust and credibility of Government to listen to communities and act in their best interests."

Hunters Hill residents can lodge submissions for or against the proposal via the link: http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/?action=view_job&job_id=2261

"Please make our views heard," Ms Clark said.