

HUNTERS HILL

The toxic wait continues



Rosemary Manusu has been trying to get the government to clean up the low-level radioactive waste site in Nelson Parade, Hunters Hill, for 40 years. Picture: Troy Snook

Residents the victims of government inaction

Steven Deare

ROSEMARY Manusu has the letter she received from the State Government in 1978 promising to decontaminate her street.

The mother of three and her veterinarian husband Perry moved into their double-storey house in Nelson Pde in 1965 when there was no hint of a problem.

The discovery of low-level radioactive waste at the former uranium processing plant was a surprise but officials reassured residents they would act quickly.

Forty years later, Mrs Manusu is still waiting.

The 80-year-old widow has lived through a 2008 parliamentary inquiry and pledges from governments past and present but is yet to see any action.

Mrs Manusu said she would like to downsize but history suggests she would not receive a fair price. Buyers are wary of the street and no house has sold since 2012.

Mrs Manusu is in good health but does not take her future for granted.

Timeline



» 1978: Government declares former uranium plant site contaminated and promises clean-up

» 1982: Government orders two houses on site be knocked down

» 1992: The two houses are demolished

» 2007: Government says it will clean the site

» 2008: Parliamentary inquiry recommends clean-up

» 2014: Government rules out proposal to send waste to Kemps Creek disposal facility

“I wouldn’t be able to live in this big house on my own,” she said of later life. “So I try not to think ahead.”

Mrs Manusu and her husband sold part of their land in 2001 to their daughter’s family when concerns about the site had receded.

But subsequent findings at the site, which prompted the 2008 parliamentary inquiry, saw the land declared unsafe.

Prospective buyers became wary again.

Mrs Manusu said she was embarrassed her daughter’s family had shared her troubles. “How would you feel if you sold to your family something you thought was going to be good and it turns out they can’t sell?” she said.

“Their boys will want to move out some day and they will want to downsize in future.”

The State Government has reserved \$30 million to remediate the site.

However, it has ruled out moving the waste to a Kemps Creek disposal site and is looking for another.

Mrs Manusu believes politicians are unwilling to act due to the risk of upsetting voters who live near disposal sites.

She also has advice for those in the community who believe Nelson Pde residents are inadvertently harming the suburb’s reputation by airing their grievances.

“The waste needs to be removed for the sake of the whole suburb,” she said.

“It’s not our fault it’s there. We’re the innocent victims.”