

## **New South Wales Uranium Free Charter**

New South Wales is at a crossroads in relation to uranium exploration and mining. The current push to allow uranium exploration is a direct threat to workers' safety and the long-term health of our environment and communities. As history shows, uranium mining makes little economic sense and leaves a lasting radioactive legacy.

Uranium is unlike any other mineral – it has uniquely dangerous properties and associated risks. Uranium mining is linked to the production of some of the world's most toxic and long-lasting industrial wastes and the proliferation of the world's most destructive weapons.

Since the beginning of the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in Japan, governments and investors have been reconsidering and divesting from the uranium sector. Around the world nuclear power programs are being reviewed with many being reduced or closed.<sup>1</sup> Despite this New South Wales recently removed a 26-year ban on uranium exploration: in the shadow of Fukushima we should not be opening our state to uranium mining.

Uranium exploration and mining in NSW would result in severe environmental damage at and around any mine site, including the permanent contamination of water. It would increase health risks to workers and communities across the state through increased exposure to radiation from uranium ore and other materials like radon gas, heavy metals, acids and industrial chemicals.

It is unacceptable that the NSW government has removed the right of Aboriginal Land Councils to refuse access to their lands for uranium exploration.<sup>2</sup> Uranium exploration must not be conducted without the free, prior and informed consent of Aboriginal custodians and landowners.<sup>3</sup>

The nuclear industry promotes nuclear power as a solution to climate change. It is not.<sup>4</sup> We cannot solve one environmental and social problem by embracing another. Investment in renewable energy would create thousands of jobs, especially in regional Australia, without the health risks associated with uranium mining and nuclear energy.

Our state's future lies not in the contested and contaminating uranium industry, but as an international leader in renewable generation and efficient energy use.

We call on all Members of Parliament to resist the push for uranium mining in NSW. The nuclear industry is high cost and high risk. Our shared energy future should be renewable – not radioactive.

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<sup>1</sup> *The World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2012*, Mycle Schneider Consulting, Paris, July 2012 at <http://www.worldnuclearreport.org/spip.php?article30>

<sup>2</sup> [Mining Legislation Amendment \(Uranium Exploration\) Bill 2012](#) -Schedule 5 Amendment of Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 No 42

<sup>3</sup> *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* Article 32 at <http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples/DeclarationontheRightsofIndigenousPeoples.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Dr Jim Green, *Nuclear Power: No Solution to Climate Change*, Australian Conservation Foundation et al, September 2005 at <http://foe.org.au/sites/default/files/NukesNoSolutionWord.doc>