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Dear Sir/Madam,

**Selection Process for a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility in South
Australia**

Please find attached a submission in regards to the above mentioned inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Claire Wiseman
Chief Executive Officer

SUBMISSION FOR SELECTION PROCESS FOR A NATIONAL RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Background

Regional Development Australia Far North (RDA Far North) is a not-for-profit incorporated association governed by a volunteer Board comprised from local people with a skills mix across industry, business, government and community. Our role is to foster and enhance a robust, diversified, vibrant and growing economy across Far North SA through the timely and professional provision of economic development services.

RDA Far North maintains a neutral position in regards to the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility proposal being considered within the region we cover.

The Far North SA Region

The Far North region of South Australia, as per Regional Development Australia Committee boundaries, covers approximately 65% of South Australia. The area has a land mass of just under 650,000km² with a population of ¹27,629 and incorporates the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands. The region takes in the iconic Flinders Ranges and Outback region, popular and well visited tourism destinations in the State. The Flinders Ranges is also now going through the process to be recognised as a World Heritage site.

The main townships in the region include (but are not limited to) Port Augusta, Quorn, Hawker, Leigh Creek, Copley, Lyndhurst, Marree, Innamincka, William Creek, Oodnadatta, Marla, Mintabie, Coober Pedy, Glendambo, Pimba, Woomera and Roxby Downs. Some of these remote townships are between 800 - 1,000 kilometres from Port Augusta, the largest city in the region (population of ¹13,808).

Barndioota (Wallerberdina Station) is in the RDA Far North region.

Terms of Reference

The appropriateness and thoroughness of the site selection process for a national radioactive waste management facility and Kimba and Hawker in South Australia, noting the Government has stated that it will not impose such a facility on an unwilling community, with particular reference to:

- a) the financial compensation offered to applicants for the acquisition of land under the Nomination of Land Guidelines;**
- b) how the need for ‘broad community support’ has played and will continue to play a part in the process including:**
 - i) the definition of ‘broad community support’, and**
 - ii) how ‘broad community support’ has been or will be determined for each process advancement stage;**
- c) how any need for Indigenous support has played and will continue to play a part in the process, including how Indigenous support has been or will be determined for each process advancement stage;**

¹ ABS Census Data, 2016

- d) whether and/or how the Government's 'community benefit program' payments affect broad community and Indigenous community sentiment;
- e) whether wider (Eyre Peninsula or state-wide) community views should be taken into consideration and, if so, how this is occurring or should be occurring; and
- f) any other related matters.

Broad Community Support

The Australian Government undertook a 120 day community consultation process at the beginning of the Barndioota focused project, with that ending early March 2016. This process included community meetings, face to face meetings and a community survey. It is our understanding that the survey took in a 50km radius of the Barndioota site and was carried out via telephone and postal survey. The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, in an open letter of response to the Flinders Local Action Group, on 30 March 2017 stated "2The ORIMA survey found that 65 per cent of respondents wanted to continue to Phase 2 of the process to site a facility. This survey received 146 responses from the Barndioota area, with a response rate of 50 per cent. The survey sample was randomly selected from the adult population in the Barndioota area, in order to be statistically robust."

In reviewing this response RDA Far North has calculated that the 292 people that were surveyed represents approximately 75% of the original 50km radius around Barndioota population. However since this original survey, the 'broader community' has now been expanded to include The Flinders Ranges Council boundary area in addition to this 50km radius. The 32016 Census data records the population of The Flinders Ranges Council Local Government area as 1,730. There are approximately 1,770 residing in the 'broader community' area, and this original survey result now only represents 16.5% of the population.

It is recommended that future voting processes are undertaken, the same process is used as the one undertaken for the Kimba project e.g. postal ballot overseen by the Australian Electoral Commission. This process would give all members of the 'broader community, an opportunity to formally contribute their opinion to the process.

Changing the boundary to include the whole of The Flinders Ranges Council area is seen as a positive as the communities of Hawker, Quorn and Cradock and the underlying stations and satellite towns such as Wilpena Pound and Rawnsley Park in the Flinders Ranges are all very close knit and work together to achieve similar goals in furthering the promotion and economic development of the region. Towns such as Quorn are also a major service point for the other communities and as such can offer a wide variety of services and input to the overall project.

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science has been very proactive and transparent in the provision of information to the community in way of offering face to face meetings, having a regular presence in the office in Hawker and satellite office in Quorn, holding community information sessions and allowing ongoing feedback of information or questions regarding the project.

² <http://radioactivewaste.gov.au/news/response-flag-0>

³

http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2006/quickstat/LGA41830?opendocument&navpos=220

The formation of the Barndioota Consultative Committee and the Economic Working Committee has also offered members of the community a chance to be involved in the project at a higher and strategic level. It was positive to see the high response to the call for nominations of the Consultative Committee and the subsequent decision by the Department to expand the number of members of the committee due to this response.

Community Benefit Programme

RDA Far North has been involved with the rollout of both rounds of the Community Benefit Programme. The first round in 2016 saw RDA Far North staff work with many businesses to assist in developing applications, preparing project plans, filling out online application forms, seeking quotes and letters of support with extensive support provided to multiple businesses who were unfamiliar with the process of applying for grants.

The first round saw just over \$2m invested into 11 projects within the catchment area, however, 90% of this funding was in Hawker, with only one project funded outside of Hawker, that being the Colebrook Aquaponics Expansion. 82% (9) of the projects were community based, with the other 18% (2) being private businesses. It is our understanding that two of the overall projects have not commenced due to varying circumstances with one of these from private and the other from the community.

Of the 11 successful projects from round one, six were for the construction of infrastructure and totaled \$1.6 million. Utilising an impact analysis tool the total output, including all direct, industrial and consumption effects is estimated to increase by up to \$2.495 million, and total employment, including all direct, industrial and consumption effects is estimated to increase by up to 7 jobs within the Council region the projects were funded. This is a significant positive impact for this small community area.

Some feedback from businesses after the funding announcement reflected that some were uncertain if they were eligible to apply or for the private sector, didn't want to be seen to be supporting the project, even though the funding would benefit their business and the overall region. There is a certain stigma that still exists with the funding, however as future rounds progress and are announced the overall community benefit will be better recognised and accepted.

However, for the second round of the programme there was more of a response as more of the businesses and community organisations could see how the funding stream worked and how it would be beneficial to the community. RDA Far North assisted a total of 15 businesses who submitted final application with once again varying degrees of assistance from checking applications or providing letters of support only to undertaking research, preparation of full applications and accompanying documents such as project plans etc. There were also a number of other businesses that we assisted who didn't submit application. It was pleasing to see such a high number of businesses that were interested in this second round, and the interest will only grow if more rounds are announced. It will also be great to see a wider spread of projects across the broader community.

The review process for the Programme involves the Barndioota Consultative Committee reviewing all applications and making recommendations to the Minister as to what projects should be approved to proceed. The Minister makes the final decision. However, as with

many small regional communities many members of the Committee also play a key role in the development of applications that they themselves are reviewing, which if not managed appropriately could be perceived as a conflict of interest. The make-up of the Committee membership aligned with the original 50Km radius, with applications accepted from beyond this radius and in round one, one application outside of the radius was successful. This has created a perception amongst the broader community that any applications outside of that radius will not be recommended for approval to the Minister. This can disrupt harmony across communities and there are concerns about the impact of this on the future of the programme and particular projects.

Overall, the Community Benefit Programme offers an opportunity for many small and medium businesses who do not usually have access to grants, especially up to 100%, and are not competing against larger communities who generally have greater capacity for matched funding. The Community Benefit Programme in this instance, provides the unique opportunity to grow and invest in their businesses which in turns has a contribution to the overall town, regional and state economy. More successful operating business and improved community infrastructure provides more offerings to tourists and encourages them to spend longer in the area and region and also prompts them to provide great word of mouth recommendations to others looking to travel to the area.

It is also pleasing to see that the announcement process for the programme is not a lengthy one. For example, some funding streams can take up to 3-6 months to announce projects, which can impact on delivery of service for businesses who have applied as they have to put the project on hold to await announcement, which is sometimes quite detrimental financially for them. For smaller projects such as those that are funded under this programme, it is important to maintain the momentum and keep the announcement for successful projects to a tighter timeframe. This also encourages more proponents to apply next time as they know they will hear about their success within a workable timeframe.

State-wide Community Views

Much of the consultation to date has focused on the immediate/broader community areas. This is certainly the main area of possible impact, however there are many visitors to the regions, in particular the Flinders Ranges and Outback tourism region which according to data released in December 2017 by the South Australian Tourism Commission, the Flinders Ranges and Outback Region reached an annual average of over 3,000,000 total overnight stays for the period September 2015-September 2017, resulting in \$410m worth of expenditure. This is the highest total overnight stays of all the regions (outside of Adelaide).

Therefore the views of the wider population who visit, pass through and stay in these areas could be considered in the overall picture as an element in a broad consultation process. This said, we acknowledge that this would be difficult to undertake given the transient nature of these visitors and the many areas, states and countries that they visit from.

A state-wide view could be considered in a broader sense as the perception of the region may be viewed differently if the visitors do not know the facts about the proposed facility and may have misconceptions if they are not informed directly or involved in the process. That said, it is important to acknowledge that the most direct impact will be felt locally and whilst a State-wide viewpoint has a role, it should not be a deciding factor; more so an opportunity to

communicate information so as to provide a broader sense of real understanding of the proposal.

Any Other Related Matters

Industry Forum

RDA Far North is currently working with AusIndustry in the organisation of an Industry Forum to be held in Hawker on 4 May 2018. This forum is designed to inform residents and businesses about the project and also enable them to see what future opportunities may be available in terms of employment and contracts/tenders should the facility proceed. This is a very important event from a local and regional business perspective and will enable businesses to meet with the Department and get a real feel for the project beyond the consultation stage. RDA Far North has supplied a list of local and regional businesses that should be invited to attend and RDA Far North will also have a stall on the day. We are keen to see this event progress and look forward to continuing to contribute and participate.

Summary

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that another broader community vote be undertaken, however, this should use the same process as the one undertaken for the Kimba project e.g. postal ballot overseen by the Australian Electoral Commission. This process would give all members of the 'broader community' an opportunity to formally contribute their opinion to the process and will be seen as being more of an official process and result.
- It is recommended that the Department continue with future rounds of the Community Benefit Programme as it offers many businesses and community organisations a chance to improve current or construct new infrastructure that makes the area and overall region more attractive as it can better services its residents and tourists alike.
- It is recommended that the Department consider and design a process for a state-wide communication in order to lift the profile of the project and to ensure that information that is distributed is accurate and timely.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry and we welcome an opportunity to discuss our submission further.