



Australian Nuclear Forum Inc.

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24/11/03

All Sutherland Shire Councillors
Administration Centre
Eton Street
Sutherland, NSW

Dear Councillor

RE: SSC Public Opinion Survey about ANSTO's Nuclear Waste

Ours is a small organisation of experienced nuclear professionals most of whom live in the Sutherland Shire. Most of us also used to work for the AAEC/ANSTO, but are not writing to defend or criticise operations at Lucas Heights.

What we are concerned about is the opinion survey of Shire residents conducted in June of this year by the Strategic Planning Unit of the SSC. The results of this survey were reported in the SSC research report "Community Perceptions of Two Approaches to Handling Nuclear Waste from ANSTO (July 2003)." This survey most recently has been used as a reference document supporting submissions to the NSW Joint Select Committee on the Transportation and Storage of Nuclear Waste.

The ANF does not believe that this is a clearly objective survey – the major reason being that it was conducted by SSC staff and apparently the results supported the already assumed majority position of the Councillors. The conduct of surveys that can accurately gauge the public opinion is a well developed art and this survey does not comply in several other respects: (1) Respondents should have knowledge of the subject. As pointed out in the Executive Summary of the research report (points 4 & 5), the community has a "general lack of knowledge" about ANSTO nuclear waste; (2) Questions should be unambiguous. The use of the word "concern" in the key questions 4, 5 and 6 is ambiguous. Concern can mean anxiety or it can mean involvement. A person could also be concerned that the NRWR may not be established. (3) Rating scales should have a mid null point. The range of possible options in questions 4, 5 and 6 provided the null point (i.e. "Not Concerned") as the **first** of five levels of concern – leading those not wishing to seem extreme in their views to choose No. 3 "Moderately Concerned," and in fact, the means of responses for all questions using this system were between 3 and 4.

As noted most of the ANF members live in the Shire and as a group we are disappointed that public funds were used to develop such a questionable assessment of public sentiment on this subject. However, we would be pleased to receive any comments you might have on the above observations.

Yours sincerely

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