



COUNCIL POLICY

Declaration of the City of Adelaide as a Nuclear Free Zone

Approved by: *Council 27 February 1995*

Subsequent Amendments:

Date, authorisation and reference to aspects amended

Document Owner

Position: *Manager, City Development (Stuart Moseley)*

Phone: 8203 7535

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

For Council to declare the City of Adelaide a Nuclear Free Zone.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Council at its meeting on 7th November, 1994, resolved that a report be brought forward for consideration of declaring the City of Adelaide a Nuclear Free Zone.

2.2 A Nuclear Free Zone is a place which has been declared “off limits” to the nuclear arms race and all stages of the nuclear fuel cycle.

Radioactive materials used for approved medical and research purposes and some industrial applications are generally not restricted by this definition even though there may be concern about the safe use, storage, handling and disposal of these materials.

A Nuclear Free Zone is any geographic area, regardless of size, in which:

- there are no nuclear weapons, nor any facilities associated with the development, manufacture, transport or use of nuclear weapons, component parts and associated technology;
- there are no nuclear power plants, including power stations, uranium enrichment and reprocessing plants;
- no major radioactive materials or wastes are created, used, stored or transported;
- no uranium exploration, mining or export takes place;
- there are no ports of call or landing rights for any nuclear forces, including nuclear-armed and/or powered vessels and aircraft.

2.3 Councils are charged with many aspects of the health, safety and well-being of people. It is important that Councils consider nuclear and radiation issues as part of their responsibilities for health, town planning, community information and education. Local Government’s powers in areas related to nuclear power, weapons and defence are limited but they can be a voice for their community and advocate positive initiatives that can be implemented by other levels of government.

Local nuclear free zone declarations and signs have limited legal significance, however, they are an important public statement of the views of a Council and its local community.

2.4 Legal Aspect

Nuclear Free Zones cannot be directly implemented by a Local Government Authority.

Anything in relation to safe storage, transport and handling of radioactive substance (nuclear material) is administered by Radiation Protection Control Branch of South Australian Health Commission under the Radiation Protection Control Act, 1983.

While the Commission is responsible for safe handling of radioactive substances and Council has no power, this does not derogate the Council to apply the general provisions of Public and Environmental Health Act in its municipality.

2.5 Health Risks of Nuclear Energy

Health Risks associated with nuclear energy are from radiation.

Two kinds of injury from radiation are recognised by National Health and Medical Research Council, called ‘deterministic’ effects and ‘stochastic’ effects, which correspond roughly to high and low radiation doses.

It is presumed that there is a small risk even at very low doses and that the higher the dose, the greater the risk.

Man has always lived in an environment which includes ionizing radiation from naturally occurring radioactive substances. Whether continuous exposure to low level radiation is deleterious to man it still a matter of speculation, hence the basis of concern expressed by the community at large today.

2.6 Issues on Nuclear Free Zone

Since 1977, 115 Australian Local Government Authorities declared their municipalities a Nuclear Free Zone, including 10 from South Australia. The 10 SA Councils are:-

- Elizabeth City Council;
- Gawler Town Council;
- Hindmarsh Town Council;
- Kensington and Norwood City Council;
- Munno Para City Council;
- Noarlunga City Council;
- Port Adelaide City Council;
- Prospect City Council;
- St. Peters Town Council;
- Unley City Council;

Also the Capital Cities of:-

- Sydney City Council;
- Melbourne City Council.

2.7 A “Nuclear Free Zone” excludes any activities which are associated with nuclear radioactive material in its area, but allows exclusion for the use of medical radioactive substance. Other fields such as geology, geophysics, forensic science, structural engineering and materials analysis use radioactive equipment.

2.8 Since it is impossible to live in a zone which is totally free of natural radiation, the declaration "Nuclear Free Zone" is not scientifically correct. A similar effect could be gained if the suggested title "Nuclear Safe Zone" were used.

3. CONCLUSION

The declaration of Nuclear Free Zone by Council and the erection of signs have limited legal significance, however, they are an important public statement of the view of the Council and its community, indicating that they are against any harmful effects which may occur to the environment through any radioactive substance.

As it is not possible for a zone to be totally nuclear free, it would be prudent to declare zones "nuclear safe".