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To: Committee Secretary and Members  
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties  
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**Supplementary Submission: Inquiry into the AUK Treaty:** Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on Nuclear-Powered Submarine Partnership and Collaboration.

Dear Secretary, Chair, and Members:

The following unresolved question demands an answer. Considering the blatant failure of democratic leadership and institutional order, especially in the USA, Australia would be even more foolish to ratify either agreement. The credibility of the AUK and AUKUS arrangements requires careful analysis so I asked ChatGPT to give me its considered opinion to assist you. Please accept it as a supplement to my main comments, already submitted.

**Can the USA and UK governments be able and trusted to honour the AUK and AUKUS Treaties and other agreements to which they are party, which are supposed to support and protect Australia in a regional or global armed conflict?**

**ChatGPT said:**

Short answer: there's no automatic guarantee. You can rely on consultation and cooperation—but not an automatic military rescue—and even the help that's promised will remain heavily dependent on US/UK politics, budgets, and industrial capacity. AUKUS isn't a mutual-defence pact, and even ANZUS only commits the U.S. and Australia to **consult** and to “act to meet the common danger” **in accordance with their constitutional processes**—which means political choices in Washington and London will decide what help arrives, how fast, and how much. ([spf.org](https://www.spf.org), [Australian Parliament House](https://www.aph.gov.au))

### What the agreements actually require (and don't)

- **AUKUS is not a mutual-defence pact.** It's a capability and tech-sharing framework (subs, advanced systems), not an Article-5-style guarantee. [Default](#)
- **ANZUS (1951) is the relevant defence treaty.** It obliges parties to *consult* and to *act in accordance with their constitutional processes*—which may or may not mean fighting alongside Australia. [Avalon ProjectABC](#)

- **The new Australia–UK “Geelong Treaty” (July 26, 2025)** deepens the submarine partnership (SSN-AUKUS), codifies UK rotations/port visits, and enables workforce/regulatory build-out in Australia—but again, it doesn’t create an automatic defence clause. [Australian Submarine AgencyGOV.UK](#)

## What the treaties actually promise

- **The new Australia–UK “Geelong Treaty” (July 26, 2025)** deepens the submarine partnership (SSN-AUKUS), codifies UK rotations/port visits, and enables workforce/regulatory build-out in Australia—but again, it doesn’t create an automatic defence clause. [Australian Submarine AgencyGOV.UK](#)
- **AUKUS (Pillar I/II):** a *capability and tech-sharing* partnership (nuclear-powered subs; advanced tech), not a collective-defence treaty like NATO Article 5. UK Parliament and academic briefings make this point explicitly. ([Research Briefings, spf.org](#))
- **ANZUS (U.S.–Australia):** Article IV says each party *would act* to meet the common danger, but explicitly “in accordance with its constitutional processes”—no automatic military intervention. ([Australian Parliament House](#))
- **FPDA (with UK):** a *consultation* arrangement with Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, NZ, and the UK—not a mutual-defence guarantee. ([Ministry of Defence](#))
- **New UK–Australia “Geelong Treaty” (2025):** a 50-year bilateral deal to design/build/operate SSN-AUKUS boats and support a UK submarine presence in WA; it deepens UK–AU defence industrial cooperation but (again) isn’t a warfighting guarantee. ([Defence Ministers, GOV.UK](#))

## Are they able to deliver?

**United States (industrial capacity):** The submarine industrial base is under strain. GAO reports Virginia-class production is running at ~60% of the planned two-boats-per-year pace, with major schedule risk on the Columbia program—factors that directly affect AUKUS timelines and the planned sale of 3 Virginia-class boats to Australia in the 2030s. Congress has *authorized* those transfers and poured money into the industrial base, but hitting the necessary output (2.0–2.33 boats/yr) remains a challenge. ([Government Accountability Office, armed-services.senate.gov, everycrsreport.com](#))

**United Kingdom (capacity and prioritization):** London has now signed the 50-year AUKUS treaty with Australia and is expanding submarine/shipbuilding, but its new Strategic Defence Review sets a clear “**NATO-first**” posture; capacity and affordability pressures persist even as spending rises. That implies UK contributions to an Indo-Pacific contingency would be discretionary and scaled against European demands. ([GOV.UK, Research Briefings](#)) UK affordability pressures are acute. The National Audit Office has repeatedly flagged the MOD equipment plan as fiscally stretched, with large nuclear-submarine bills crowding other priorities—raising risks to long-term delivery promises. [National Audit Office \(NAO\)](#)

**UK affordability pressures are acute.** The National Audit Office has repeatedly flagged the MOD equipment plan as fiscally stretched, with large nuclear-submarine bills crowding other priorities—raising risks to long-term delivery promises. [National Audit Office \(NAO\)](#) Recent reporting underscores these pressures (defence spending needs vs. fiscal reality; submarine cost growth), which can ripple into AUKUS delivery schedules and breadth of support. [Financial TimesThe Times](#)

## Can they be trusted to honour commitments in a crisis?

- **Legal/constitutional guardrails:** In the UK, deploying forces is a government prerogative (Parliament's role is convention, not law). In the U.S., ANZUS actions must pass each country's constitutional processes (and U.S. war powers politics can be contentious). That's not bad faith—it's how both systems work—but it means outcomes depend on the government of the day. ([Research Briefings](#), [Congress.gov](#), [Australian Parliament House](#))
- **Policy volatility:** In mid-2025 the U.S. Defense Department launched a **review of AUKUS**, signaling potential reprioritisation under the current administration—even as many in Congress and allies push to keep it on track. This is precisely the sort of political variability that can affect delivery and support tempo. ([USNI News](#), [Defense News](#))
- **Counter-evidence of follow-through:** The U.S. has enacted major **statutory** enablers—NDAA 2024 authorizes Virginia sales and adds Australia/UK to Defense Production Act Title III; State's 2024 **ITAR AUKUS exemption** reduced licensing friction. These steps are harder (though not impossible) to unwind. ([armed-services.senate.gov](#), [Congress.gov](#), [Export Compliance Solutions](#))

## Bottom line for Australia

- **Treaty strength:** Low (AUKUS) to Medium (ANZUS consult/act); no automatic defence guarantee. ([Australian Parliament House](#))
- **Political reliability (right now): Mixed**—UK is signalling long-term industrial partnership with a NATO-first lens; the U.S. has strong congressional backing and export-control reforms, but an ongoing executive-branch review creates short-term uncertainty. ([GOV.UK](#), [Research Briefings](#), [USNI News](#))
- **Practical ability: Constrained in the near term** by U.S. shipyard throughput and UK capacity; improving, but schedule risk is real. ([Government Accountability Office](#))
- **Hedge wisely.** Lock in *specific* milestones and access rights (rotations, spares, IP, training pipelines), press for statutory guarantees where possible, and deepen parallel security ties (Japan, regional partners) while accelerating sovereign capabilities at home.

## Restating my earlier submission

The proposed AUK Treaty is an insult and a burden to all future generations of Australians, by locking Australia into a high-risk, multi-century, unaffordable, nuclear program with no end-of-life plan for Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) reactors and wastes. It would cost A\$268–368 billion or more over 30 years; depend on crisis-ridden UK (and US) submarine building industries; and undermine democratic processes and protections. A dangerous non-proliferation precedent and political pressure would damage Pacific and Asian regional political stability.

Australia would inherit permanent responsibility for nuclear wastes and decommissioning submarines. The UK has failed to successfully manage these processes for 45 years. A June 2025 report notes that a Royal Navy nuclear submarine is being scrapped for the first time, with work expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

Including this sub, the former HMS Swiftsure, the Royal Navy has a backlog of 23 retired nuclear-powered subs all in need of disposal.

The Committee must recommend cancellation of the Treaty. If it proceeds, despite all our warnings, at a minimum the agreement should be postponed until finalisation of international safeguards, permanent nuclear waste plans and proven technologies, full costings for this and future generations of Australians, and ongoing open and transparent participation in planning and consultations for the interested public and independent experts.

The arrangement would:

- Create a dangerous potential nuclear proliferation precedent by withdrawing weapons-grade material from IAEA safeguards under an as-yet non-existent, unresolved, and unprecedented “Article 14 arrangement”.
- Breach democratic norms: no public participation or consultation, limited parliamentary oversight, and secrecy clauses that diminish and delay accountability to the public and the parliament.
- Lock Australia into a multi-decade, high-risk nuclear program with no credible end-of-life plans for highly enriched uranium reactors, weapons-grade nuclear wastes, and obsolete submarines.
- Cost at least A\$268–368 over 30 years i.e. >\$30 billion/year, diverting funds from other immediately urgent and soluble defense and civil society priorities.
- Depend on US and UK submarine building industries already in crisis, that are suffering massive delays, cost blowouts, and overruns, that Australia has already helped to prop up with \$1.6 billion, and more owed.
- Expose Australia to regional instability: Indonesia, Malaysia and Pacific leaders warn AUK would undermine nuclear-free norms agreed under the Rarotonga Treaty, risks a regional arms race, and high-risk instability.
- Commit Australia to hosting permanent high-level nuclear waste dumps, with the defence establishment already assessing various dump sites (including Woomera) and preparing to override state laws and indigenous land rights.
- Deepen technical, industrial and operational interoperability with the UK (and USA), which is inimical to increasing community calls for Australian independence and autonomy. Though the arrangement is not a NATO-style “consider an attack upon one as an attack against all” commitment, it would still propel us into other people’s wars, similar to many of those fought in the past.

The Committee must recommend that the AUK Treaty not be ratified but, as a minimum, ratification of the treaty must await:

1. An Article 14 safeguards system that is published, tested, approved by the IAEA Board, and debated in the Australian community in a quest for a social licence.
2. Credible, fully-funded and tested, and logistically sound plans and technologies for decommissioning reactors and submarines, comprehensive permanent waste management, and inter-generational stewardship for the next 1,000 years, at least.
3. Independent cost/schedule analyses to demonstrate feasibility at all levels and at all phases of the proposals.
4. Full public participation, consultation, and parliamentary scrutiny that are mandated before any final decisions to ratify could be taken.
5. A referendum, which is fully justified considering the short and long-term hazards, risks and costs of the proposal for this and all future generations of Australians.

## **Conclusions**

The Committee must recommend rejecting the AUK Treaty. The AUK Treaty is an immense inter-generational liability which characterises unacceptable secrecy, unmanageable nuclear risks, and enormous unbudgeted costs that may undermine the nation's revenue and credit rating for centuries to come. It would not strengthen national security, even when the subs were operational, but weakens Australian sovereignty and independence. Australia would be left with permanent, unmanageable, financial and nuclear legacies for which future generations would curse us.