

Submission to Senate Inquiry into Defence Legislation Amendment (Naval Nuclear Propulsion) Bill 2023

I am opposed to the proposed Bill which would amend the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998* and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, to allow for the construction or operation of a naval nuclear propulsion plant, providing for its use in nuclear-powered submarines.

The Bill aims to support Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarines, to which I am opposed for the following reasons:

1. If the Bill is passed, concerns about Australia's loss of control and sovereignty are paramount, as the technology and components for the submarines would be subject to the agreement and control of the US and UK.
2. The lack of plans for disposal of depleted fuel and reactors, as well as the long-term storage of highly radioactive nuclear waste, is irresponsible and immoral. Future generations must not be burdened with an unknown amount of toxic nuclear waste for which there is no safe disposal and which will persist in the environment for hundreds of thousands of generations.
3. Similarly, there is no assurance of Australia's ability to address accidents, nuclear meltdowns, or attacks on nuclear-powered submarines, nor are there contingency disaster plans for densely populated areas near proposed submarine bases.
4. Australia should not contribute to increased risks and tensions in the region, especially considering its disregard for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its uranium sales to nuclear-armed nations.
5. The need for the acquisition of these nuclear-powered submarines rests on the assumption that China has plans to attack Australia, and there is [no evidence for this](#). Rather we should be progressing diplomatic relations, expressing a desire for peaceful cooperation, not militarization and war. It is important to remember that Australia benefits from a healthy trade surplus from China, and has a substantial trade deficit with the US.
6. Australia needs to ensure we do not get dragged in to another unjust war promoted by the US. Thus, it is important that a properly informed parliamentary debate take place prior to Australia's engagement in any future military conflict. The acquisition of nuclear weapons adds extra layers of complexity and risk to any such involvement.
7. The government's plan to exempt nuclear power plants on submarines from independent regulation violates international nuclear safety principles.
The proposal for Defence to regulate its own nuclear submarine program is seen as disregarding advice from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Federal Government's own nuclear safety advisory council, which stress the importance of regulatory independence.
8. In the event of a modern nuclear war, there will be mass devastation. There will be no winners. Australia's economic, social and environmental interests are best served by keeping out of the nuclear arms race.

Consequently, I urge the Inquiry to oppose the **oppose** the approval of the Defence Legislation Amendment (Naval Nuclear Propulsion) Bill 2023.

Dr Hilary Green

27 May, 2023