

Cover Statement – Australia’s Interest Above All in the Geelong Treaty

Every decision on the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Partnership must be steered by one compass point: Australia’s national interest. This agreement offers a once in a generation chance to strengthen our security, expand our sovereign industrial base, and ensure our Navy can protect maritime lifelines in an increasingly unpredictable region. But opportunity alone is not enough — the benefits must be secured on Australian terms, delivering maximum strategic advantage, economic return, and technological sovereignty to the Australian people.

Executive Brief

Inquiry: Nuclear-Powered Submarine Partnership and Collaboration Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Core Position: Australia’s security, sovereignty, and economic prosperity must remain the guiding principle in every aspect of this partnership. The Geelong Treaty offers a generational opportunity to strengthen defence capability, build sovereign industry, and deepen strategic alliances.

Key Points

- **Strategic Deterrence & Capability** – SSN-AUKUS submarines will secure Australia’s maritime approaches and deter potential threats in a contested Indo-Pacific.
- **Sovereign Control** – All operational, sustainment, and deployment decisions must remain under Australian authority.
- **Economic & Industrial Growth** – Construction and maintenance in Australia will create thousands of advanced-manufacturing jobs, boost STEM skills, and anchor local industry.
- **Technology Transfer** – The agreement must ensure Australia gains the expertise to independently maintain and upgrade its fleet.
- **Transparency & Accountability** – Annual public reporting to Parliament on progress, costs, and compliance with non-proliferation obligations.
- **Regional Stability** – Pair capability enhancements with proactive diplomacy to reassure neighbours and support peace.

Recommendations to the Committee

1. Guarantee binding Australian operational control clauses.
2. Mandate maximum local content in shipbuilding and sustainment.
3. Establish a national submarine skills and training program.
4. Require independent oversight and transparent reporting.

Summary Statement:

If implemented on Australian terms, the Geelong Treaty can deliver unmatched strategic advantage, economic benefit, and technological sovereignty. The Committee’s role is vital to lock in these gains and safeguard them for future generations.

Full Submission Letter

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20 August 2025

Committee Secretary

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

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Subject: Submission – Nuclear-Powered Submarine Partnership and Collaboration Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Dear Committee Secretary,

I write in contribution to the Committee’s consideration of the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Partnership and Collaboration Agreement, signed in Geelong on 26 July 2025. This submission is grounded in the belief that Australia’s national interest — encompassing our security, sovereignty, and long-term prosperity — must remain the decisive measure in every aspect of this partnership.

The agreement presents a generational opportunity to:

- Strengthen Australia’s strategic deterrence through the SSN-AUKUS class of nuclear-powered submarines.
- Deepen defence and technological ties with the United Kingdom under AUKUS Pillar I.
- Build a sovereign industrial base capable of sustaining, upgrading, and independently operating advanced naval assets.
- Generate thousands of high-value jobs and foster a pipeline of skills in science, technology, engineering, and trades.

Addressing Regional Concerns

Some regional and international voices have raised concerns about nuclear technology transfer, non-proliferation safeguards, perceptions of an arms race, and environmental and safety risks. These are addressed through explicit reaffirmation of treaty obligations, a commitment to conventionally-armed vessels, unprecedented IAEA safeguards, transparent engagement with partners, and strict safety protocols throughout the submarine lifecycle.

Environmental Considerations – Critical Minerals and “Mother Earth”

The program will require substantial volumes of critical minerals for propulsion, electronics, and advanced manufacturing. Demand will rise sharply, carrying potential environmental impacts if extraction and processing are not managed responsibly.

Proposed Safeguards:

Juliet Vrakas Submission Nuclear-Powered Submarine Partnership and Collaboration Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Submission date 20 August 2025

1. Enforce strict environmental and labour standards for all suppliers.
2. Publicly report on the origin and footprint of critical minerals used.
3. Invest in recycling and recovery of rare earths and other strategic materials.
4. Mandate comprehensive mine-site rehabilitation and monitoring.
5. Support low-impact mineral processing technologies.

Recommendations

1. Guarantee operational sovereignty — all deployment and sustainment decisions under Australian control.
2. Prioritise Australian suppliers, shipyards, and workforce participation.
3. Commit to regular public reporting on progress, costs, and safeguards.
4. Link the program to long-term training and education initiatives.
5. Adopt responsible sourcing, reporting, and recycling commitments for critical minerals.

Conclusion

The Geelong Treaty can deliver unmatched strategic capability, industrial growth, and technological sovereignty — achievable only if implemented with unwavering focus on Australia’s interest and environmental responsibility. The Committee’s oversight is essential to ensure these goals are realised.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely

Juliet Vrakas