



PRIME MINISTER

URANIUM MINING AND NUCLEAR ENERGY: A WAY FORWARD FOR AUSTRALIA

In light of the significance of global climate change and as the world's largest holder of uranium reserves, Australia has a clear responsibility to develop its uranium resources in a sustainable way - irrespective of whether or not we end up using nuclear power.

The expert advice that my Government has received clearly shows that Australia is giving up a major economic opportunity as a result of the excessive barriers that have been put in place to prevent uranium mining and export.

A key theme of the advice that the Government has received is that Australia should do what it can to expand our uranium exports and to remove unnecessary barriers that are acting as impediments to the efficient operation and growth of the industry.

Nuclear energy is a fact of life and a key source of clean energy in 30 countries across Europe, Asia and North America.

Nuclear energy already supplies 15 per cent of the world's electricity and is set to grow further.

I am announcing today a new strategy for the future development of uranium mining and nuclear power in Australia.

The Government will implement this strategy to increase uranium exports and to prepare for a possible expansion of the nuclear industry in Australia.

The strategy will involve a number of actions that can be taken *immediately*, including:

- removing unnecessary constraints impeding the expansion of uranium mining, such as overlapping and cumbersome regulations relating to the mining and transport of uranium ore;
- making a firm commitment to Australia's participation in the Generation IV advanced nuclear reactor research programme.

My Government will also develop four major work plans mapping out a way forward for:

- (i) an appropriate nuclear energy regulatory regime - including those to govern any future potential nuclear energy facilities in Australia;
- (ii) skills and technical training to address any identified gaps and needs to support a possible expanded nuclear energy industry;
- (iii) enhanced research and development; and
- (iv) communication strategies so that all Australians and other stakeholders can clearly understand what needs to be done and why.

Relevant Ministers and their Departments are to commence this work immediately and to report to Cabinet by around September this year;

The work plans are to be implemented in 2008.

The Government's next step will be to repeal Commonwealth legislation prohibiting nuclear activities, including the relevant provisions of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. This will be addressed soon.

My Government's strategy is in response to the findings of three major recent reports and inquiries into the complex issues relating to uranium mining and nuclear power:

- The Uranium Mining, Processing and Nuclear Energy Review (UMPNER) inquiry chaired by Dr Ziggy Switkowski;
- The recommendations of the Uranium Industry Framework (UIF) undertaken jointly by industry and government;
- The HOR Standing Committee on Industry and Resources Inquiry into Developing Australia's Non-fossil Fuel Energy Industry.

Australia has 36 per cent of the world's low cost uranium reserves. Policies or political platforms that seek to constrain the development of a safe and reliable Australian uranium industry - and which rule out the possibility of climate-friendly nuclear energy - are not really serious about addressing climate change in a practical way that does not strangle the Australian economy.

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