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[redacted]

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SUBMISSION

Agreement between the Government of Australia, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Government of the United States of America for the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information (Canberra, 22 November 2021)

Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement (ENNPIA)

I refer to the following points of the *National Interest Analysis* (ATNIA reference: [2021] ATNIA 7, ATNIF reference: [2021] ATNIF 10) that go directly to the *ENNPIA* treaty document:

NIA Points 8 and 12:

These points are both contradictory and deliberately naïve.

The NIA states that civilian personnel can gain access to nuclear knowledge ("receive access to critical training and education") but that the treaty "does not support the transfer of any equipment or technology". Students of physics know that meaningful training and education in the nuclear sciences requires access to equipment and technology. Australia has a very, very small existing cohort of scientists with **any** relevant expertise in this area.

Countries that operate military nuclear technology have a concomitant civilian nuclear industry with power reactors, a fuel cycle (including enrichment and reprocessing), massive government underwriting and a matching history of nuclear incidents. Military and civilian nuclear capabilities are joined at the hip. It is naïve and dangerous to think otherwise.

NIA Points 9 and 14:

Australia is a signatory to the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. The NPT "has three main pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy"[1]. Clearly the ENNPIA violates the third pillar. It also opens the door for violation of the first two pillars: the other two members of AUKUS use naval nuclear propulsion **for their nuclear (SLBM) deterrent**. **The ENNPIA fails to meet its own requirements before it is out of the gate.**

[1] https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/security/non-proliferation-disarmament-arms-control/policies-agreements-treaties/treaty-on-the-non-proliferation-of-nuclear-weapons/Pages/nuclear-non-proliferation-treaty

NIA Points 25, 26 and 34:

The treaty and NIA make no attempt to describe the type and level of expertise that will be required for Australia to pursue a nuclear-powered submarine capability. There is only reference to an initial "18-month AUKUS consultation period". There is no indication of the timeframes for the development of significant nuclear propulsion expertise.

This strongly suggests that Australia will not be investing in its own long-term "deep" scientific and engineering capability. Rather, it appears that naval nuclear propulsion knowledge, technology and products will be developed and owned by non-sovereign parties – and that Australia will simply purchase these military products at premium prices.

Whilst Australia has a passable record of managing non-nuclear military technology, the acquisition of military nuclear technology is highly irregular for any nation and carries enormous risks for Australia, particularly in the absence of a sufficient level of sovereign domain expertise. The public record is littered with descriptions of serious military nuclear incidents caused by blissful ignorance.

NIA Point 41:

It is extremely disturbing that the public has had **four** days to consider and comment on this treaty and NIA. The implications of this treaty are profound, yet the government is silent on nearly every timely and critical issue, including:

- This treaty is the first step towards making Australia **less** safe. Other countries will be encouraged to follow suit leading to further violations of the NPT. Australia's port cities will become targets of interest for foreign ICBMs and SLBMs.
- The cost of acquisition, operation and decommissioning of military nuclear technology over its lifetime of ~70 years may be many hundreds of billions of dollars. Nuclear-related costs are routinely underestimated by up to an order of magnitude. Hence naval nuclear propulsion is the preserve of a handful of large nation states.
- There is no such thing as safe "disposal" of spent fuel, reactors, HLRW, MLRW etc.
- The likelihood of nuclear accidents and Australia's weak response plan. When spilled, nuclear poison spreads in the environment and is virtually impossible to fully contain and clean up. It can harm living organisms for a thousand generations.
- The likelihood that – despite the assurances of the current government – Australia will inevitably develop a joint civil and military nuclear program in line with every other nation state that operates military nuclear technology.
- The paucity of sovereign domain expertise.
- The absence of an attached overview, plan, risk assessment or preliminary costings.

Politicians don't study nuclear physics. Many politicians cannot even pronounce the word "nuclear" properly. Four days is an insufficient amount of time for the informed public to consider and comment on this treaty and its implications.

Yours sincerely
Richard Weatherley