



# PERTH SOUTH WEST

## Metropolitan Alliance

Thursday 14 December 2023

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

To Whom This May Concern,

### **Submission on Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Bill 2023**

The Perth South West Metropolitan Alliance is a long standing grouping of the local governments of Fremantle, East Fremantle, Melville, Cockburn, Kwinana and Rockingham. The region contains the strategic naval infrastructure sites of HMAS Stirling and the Australian Marine Complex and is home to over 460,000 residents, in addition to a range of leading defence industry businesses.

The Alliance is generally supportive of the Bill, noting the need for unparalleled levels of safety for the personnel, supporting workers and surrounding community. The Alliance would seek some greater certainty surrounding the reporting of Nuclear Safety Incidents and directions made under the proposed legislation.

Section 21 requires a licence holder to immediately inform the regulator of an incident, however there remains ambiguity regarding further reporting from the regulator to other parties. While we accept that the regulations may further clarify disclosures, it is recommended that timeframes relating to incidents and directions being tabled in parliament be introduced into the legislation.

Such open and transparent reporting is essential to developing public acceptance of naval nuclear capabilities, particularly where it is adjacent to significant residential populations. Given Australia's demonstration of commitment to nuclear safety through its experiences at Lucas Heights and the safe operation of the US Navy with the Virginia Class submarine, it is not anticipated that incidents will occur, but the lack of mandated public disclosure may impede community acceptance of nuclear powered vessels being maintained in the region.

It is noted that under the *Australian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Act 1998*, the CEO of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency is required to table reports of directions and safety incidents in parliament within short, clearly defined timeframes. It is recommended that these disclosure requirements, that have served the civil sector well, be implemented in this defence context, to demonstrate Defence's commitment to the same high levels of safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Bill and we look forward to the consideration of the social licence implications as part of your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Warwick Carter  
Director Perth South West Metropolitan Alliance

