



Friends of the Earth Adelaide

Defence Legislation Amendment (Naval Nuclear Propulsion) Bill 2023

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The Senate has referred this Bill to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 9 June 2023. The inquiry is accepting submissions until 26 May. This is a totally inadequate timeframe.

Friends of the Earth Adelaide opposes the Bill in its entirety. The nuclear propelled submarines that the Bill seeks to permit will

- 1) undermine the spirit, even if not the letter, of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty
- 2) undermine the nuclear nonproliferation regime by setting a dangerous precedent that other countries, including but not only Iran, could exploit, particularly due to the use of highly enriched uranium fuel
- 3) create the risk of serious nuclear accidents, including sunken nuclear reactors, in Australian ports and waters
- 4) inflict on the Australian public and the Australian environment a nuclear waste problem that will last for millennia
- 5) undermine Australia's sovereignty by further reducing our ability to act independently of the United States, even when our strategic interests differ
- 6) become a massive burden on Australia's economy, representing an opportunity cost that would restrict Australia's capacity to finance the health and wellbeing of the Australian public and the Australian environment.

We recommend that the government withdraw this Bill. If it is not willing to do this immediately, it should not proceed with the Bill until it has conducted a full Parliamentary Inquiry into AUKUS, as called for by several distinguished Australians. Refer the following web site for details:

<https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/labor-greens-defence-experts-call-for-ukus-parliamentary-inquiry/>

The plan for AUKUS nuclear powered submarines is a legacy of the previous government and, in particular, of the discredited former Prime Minister Morrison. It is a plan that was not based on sound analysis, but which was hatched in secret by a very small number of people. The only reason why the Labor Government has decided to continue with this plan is because it wanted to make itself a small target in last year's election. That is a very poor reason for inflicting such a massive burden on the Australian public.

Former Prime Minister Paul Keating said the decision to continue with the AUKUS plan was Labor's worst decision in government for a century. We agree. Mr Keating is far from alone in his criticism. For example, the abovementioned distinguished Australians calling for a Parliamentary Inquiry include former Labor politicians and former senior ADF figures. The questions and criticisms that they have raised demonstrate that this short Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee inquiry is totally inadequate to properly consider the implications of such a significant and controversial decision.

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