

Christa Schwoebel

To the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
E-mail <jsct@aph.gov.au>
PO Box 6021, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT, 2600.
Ph (02) 6277 4002

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

I ask the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties to recommend the cancellation of all of Australia's uranium export treaties. A recent visit to Hiroshima reinforced my conviction that we are all called upon to prevent the creation and use of nuclear weapons. Australia's uranium exports contribute to nuclear weapons proliferation.

I am extremely concerned about flaws and limitations of the 'safeguards' arrangements. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has no authority or capacity to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation. Al Gore noted in 2006: "For eight years in the White House, every weapons-proliferation problem we dealt with was connected to a civilian reactor program. And if we ever got to the point where we wanted to use nuclear reactors to back out a lot of coal ... then we'd have to put them in so many places we'd run that proliferation risk right off the reasonability scale."

There are no Australian inspections of nuclear stockpiles or facilities using Australian-Obligated Nuclear Materials (AONM) and Australia has never even invoked the right to prohibit the reprocessing of AONM.

I find it unacceptable that Australia has uranium export agreements with:

- four of the 'declared' nuclear weapons states (USA, UK, China, France), none of which are complying with their disarmament obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT);
- countries with a history of weapons-related research based on their civil nuclear programs (such as South Korea and Taiwan)
- countries blocking progress on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (e.g. the USA) and the proposed Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty.

I am also concerned that Coalition/Labor support and approval for uranium sales to China sets another precedent: uranium sales to undemocratic, secretive states with appalling human rights records.

Regrettably, the government has not ruled out uranium sales to Russia despite the fact that there have been no IAEA safeguards inspections in Russia since 2001; Russia is undemocratic and secretive and human rights abuses are widespread; incidents of theft/smuggling from Russian nuclear sites are common; and Russia is in violation of its disarmament obligations under the NPT.

As uranium accounts for just one-third of 1% of Australia's export revenue and only less than 0.1% contribution to employment in Australia, the benefits of the uranium industry are overstated.

Claims about the greenhouse 'benefits' of nuclear power typically ignore more greenhouse-friendly renewable energy sources and the use of several types of renewables to supply reliable base-load power (e.g. geothermal, bioenergy, solar thermal with storage, and sometimes hydro). Those claims also do not take into account the CO² emissions caused by mining, milling, transporting of the material. Cost and emissions caused by the dismantling of nuclear power stations are also ignored.

Uranium is the only energy source with a direct and repeatedly demonstrated connection to nuclear weapons proliferation . The first step to prevent nuclear proliferation is the cancellation of Australia's uranium export treaties .

I trust the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties will take my submission into consideration.

Christa Schwoebel
Founding Member of the Macleay Nuclear Free Alliance