

Mr W. M. Lewis

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry and Resources

Inquiry into developing Australia's non-fossil fuel energy industry: the Strategic Importance of Australia's Uranium Resources

To the Secretary

It is my view that there are strong strategic, environment, public health and public policy reasons to wind back rather than expand uranium mining and exports and nuclear power overseas, including:

- a continuing deep community concern and opposition to nuclear projects (including amongst many traditional owners, upon whose land mining frequently occurs);
- a track record of non-compliance and poor performance at existing mines;
- the failure of uranium regulations to protect workers and the environment;
- increased concerns about radioactive waste management, security, terrorism and nuclear proliferation directly related to Australian uranium exports; and
- state and territory government opposition to further uranium mining.

Further, there remains no proven solution for managing the dangerous and long-lived waste it produces; the potential for serious accidents is ever present; security and terrorism concerns are a much-talked-about threat; capital costs are high and licensing and construction lead times are long; cleaner energy options exist; and the risk of proliferation (remember uranium's other use - fuel for nuclear weapons) is high.

The Howard Government's 2004 *Energy White Paper* indicated the use of uranium reserves raises cost, safety and waste disposal issues in power generation and that Australia is not contemplating the domestic use of nuclear power. I supported the Government in this regard for the reasons outlined above, and believe that Australia should not be contemplating the domestic use of nuclear power, or the disposal of related waste products. This includes support for decommissioning existing reactors.

Further, a consistent international stance would involve Australia withdrawing from the nuclear cycle entirely, by halting the mining and export of uranium to other nations for its domestic use in those countries. These countries are faced with the same problems outlined above, often within the context of a much higher risk profile due to less stringent environmental (including trade), public health and safety, and governance regimes.

Finally, the perceived demand for this product is not an acceptable criterion for decision-making regarding public policy on this matter, and demand does not counteract the serious detrimental implications of its supply, which is unlikely to provide long-term benefits to Australia or the global environment.

Yours sincerely,
W. M. Lewis
