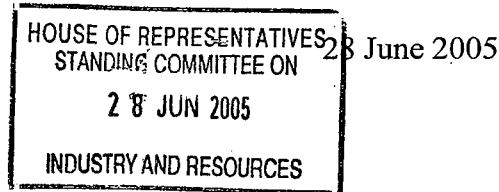


Clerk Assistant (Committees)
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Inquiry into developing Australia's non-fossil fuel energy industry

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my support for this inquiry on the strategic importance of Australia's uranium resources and for a future inquiry into the benefits and risks of nuclear power.

I have worked in the nuclear industry in Australia and overseas, and I'm possibly one of the few Australians to have done so, having worked for Pangea Resources, written a thesis on new Lucas Heights reactor, and spent 4 years with British Nuclear Fuels. This experience has given me a good understanding of the key sectors within the industry of nuclear waste disposal, reprocessing, power generation, the disposal of nuclear weapons waste, and communications and PR in the industry.

My experiences have led me to believe that, while nuclear power should not necessarily be embraced as the sole solution to climate change issues, it should be accepted and supported as an important part of the world's energy mix.

A number of factors have brought about a change in the world's attitude to nuclear power, including:

- Increased understanding of climate change and its relation to fossil fuels
- Negligible safety risks in new power reactors
- Lower costs of new power reactors, and
- A better understanding and acceptance of geological disposal as a solution to nuclear waste disposal

The growth of nuclear in the West stalled in the late eighties but energy suppliers are seriously considering the nuclear option again. The industry itself has simply been waiting for the right time for 'new build' for years and a new generation of reactors – more efficient, cheaper, cleaner and ultimately safe – have been ready for some time.

It is my belief that the US will very shortly give the go ahead for new build, perhaps by the end of the year. This should produce a snowball effect in Western countries and new reactors will be considered for countries such as the UK and Germany.

I don't necessarily believe that Australia requires nuclear power, and I am realistic enough to realise that only a unique set of circumstances will drive the option forward over the next ten years or so. It is, however, important for Australia not to stick it's

head in the sand pretending that nuclear power doesn't exist. It does exist, it is a growing industry, it remains a key part of the world's energy mix, it has the highest safety record of any large energy source, and the best looked after waste in the world!

In conclusion, the number of reactors worldwide is increasing and is expected to soon rise substantially in countries that have not built new reactors for years. An energy crisis in the near future may even prompt Australia to wonder why nuclear was never seriously considered. All these developments are relevant to Australia's consideration of uranium as a strategic resource.

Sincerely,

Pepita Maiden

Ps. should the nuclear power option be considered for Australia, might I suggest a future committee recommends Pebble Bed Modular reactors? I would be more than happy to provide further information on this or any other issue I have discussed here.