



BIPARTISAN URANIUM REPORT

*Australia's uranium —
Greenhouse friendly fuel for an energy hungry world*

RELEASED TODAY

Media conference details

Date and Time: 1.15 pm, Monday 4 December 2006

Venue: Parliament House, committee room 1R2

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry and Resources tabled its unanimous report into the strategic importance of Australia's uranium resources today.

The Chairman of the Committee, Geoff Prosser (Member for Forrest, WA), said: "The Committee has reached a unanimous and bipartisan position on the need to remove all impediments to the further development of Australia's uranium resources. All members are agreed that present restrictions on uranium exploration and mining are illogical, inconsistent and anti-competitive. State policies preventing development of new uranium mines should be lifted and legislative restrictions on uranium mining should be repealed."

In coming to its conclusion about whether to support expanded uranium production, the Committee has comprehensively examined the allegedly "unresolved" issues associated with uranium mining and the nuclear energy industry—waste, safety and proliferation: "The Committee hopes that its report will aid in improving public understanding of the uranium and nuclear energy industries, and correct widely-held misperceptions," Mr Prosser said.

In relation to greenhouse gas mitigation from production of uranium and use of nuclear energy, Deputy Chairman of the Committee, Michael Hatton (Member for Blaxland, NSW), said: "If the world were not using nuclear energy, carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from world electricity generation would be some 17 per cent higher and 8 per cent higher for the energy sector overall. If the world were not using nuclear power plants, emissions of CO₂ would be some 2.5 billion tonnes higher per year. Australia's uranium exports currently displace some 395 million tonnes of CO₂ per year, relative to use of black coal. This is an immense saving of greenhouse gas emissions that would otherwise be contributing to global warming. Moreover, Australia's total low cost uranium reserves could displace nearly 40,000 million tonnes of CO₂, if it replaced black coal electricity generation."

To generate continuous, reliable supplies of electricity on a large scale, the Committee concludes that the only alternative to fossil fuels is nuclear energy. Mr Prosser said: "Nuclear is the only proven technology for baseload power supply that does not release substantial amounts of CO₂. By virtue of its immense uranium resource endowment—amounting to some 38 per cent of the world's total Identified Resources of uranium recoverable at low cost—Australia should throw the world a climate lifeline through the expanded production and export of this greenhouse-friendly fuel."

"As well as its environmental benefits, nuclear power represents a significant means of addressing the global energy imbalance. Our uranium can be used to provide rapidly developing nations, such as China, with access to the energy required to fuel their industrialisation. As a matter of energy justice, Australia should not deny countries that wish to use nuclear power in a responsible manner the benefits from doing so. Neither should Australia refuse to export its uranium to assist in addressing the global energy imbalance and the disparity in living standards associated with this global inequity," Mr Prosser said.

The Committee concludes its report with an examination of adding value to Australia's uranium prior to export, and the skills base required to support Australia's possible future participation in the nuclear fuel cycle. The Committee urges the Australian Government to take decisive action to rebuild and expand the nation's nuclear skills base.

A majority of the Committee recommends that Australian governments examine how the nation might add value to its uranium resources while meeting non-proliferation objectives, and to develop a licensing and regulatory framework to provide for the possible establishment of fuel cycle services industries and facilities in Australia. The majority of Committee members also conclude that, subject to appropriate regulatory oversight, utilities that choose to construct nuclear power plants in Australia should now be permitted to do so.

Members of the Committee will conduct a media conference at **1.15 pm** in **Committee Room 1R2, Parliament House, Canberra** following the report's tabling.

The Committee's 14 recommendations call on governments to:

- reconsider their opposition to uranium mining and to abolish legislative restrictions on uranium mining and exploration where these exist;
- establish long-term health and radiation dose monitoring for workers in the uranium and allied industries;
- take steps to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime;
- provide funding to ensure the complete rehabilitation of all former uranium mines;
- examine establishing a greater role for the Office of Supervising Scientist in Commonwealth regulatory processes;
- encourage local industry to emulate world best practice strategies for Indigenous training and employment outcomes at uranium mines;
- address the range of impediments identified in the Committee's evidence to the expansion of the Australian uranium industry;
- provide additional funding to Geoscience Australia to assist in the discovery of new world-class uranium and other mineral deposits located under cover and at depth;
- establish a flow-through share scheme for companies conducting eligible minerals and petroleum exploration activities in Australia;
- examine incident reporting regimes at uranium mines, to aid public understanding of the real impacts on human health and the environment of any incidents that may occur;
- take steps, in partnership with industry, to address misperceptions of the uranium mining industry, the nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear power;
- rebuild Australia's nuclear skills base and expertise, including by broadening the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation's research and development mandate, and examining the re-establishment of at least one Australian University School of Nuclear Engineering; and
- provide greater support for fusion energy research.

A majority of the Committee also recommends that the Australian and state governments:

- further examine how Australia might add value to its immense uranium resource endowment prior to export, while meeting non-proliferation objectives; and
- develop a licensing and regulatory framework, which meets world's best practice, to provide for the possible establishment of fuel cycle services industries and facilities in Australia.

The report is available on the Committee's website at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/isr/uranium/report.htm>

To arrange media comment: please contact the Committee Chairman, the Hon Geoff Prosser MP, on (02) 6277 2055 (Parliament House) or (08) 9791 1146 (Electorate Office)
Deputy Chairman, Mr Michael Hatton MP, on (02) 6277 4188 (Parliament House)

For further information: please contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4594