

The Strategic Importance of Australia's Uranium Resources

In response to the queries outlined in your Terms of Reference I offer the following comments;

a, b) Uranium is no longer a strategic commodity – it is just another mineral. Uranium occurrence is widespread throughout the world and although Australia has ample reserves their quarantining has been made up for by other suppliers. The current boom in uranium prices and the projected demand has initiated a renewed world wide hunt for uranium and previously found uneconomic resources are now considered exploitable. New deposits will be found and Australia's enviable position will be degraded over time

c) The fanatical green movement has choked uranium energy production for the last 50 years and therefore maximized 'global greenhouse emissions' by forced reliance on fossil fuel usage. Future generations will no doubt look back at this green group as a significant contributor to the ozone hole and global warming when they had the power to prevent it. Exporting Australia's uranium and moving to uranium energy production in Australia will benefit the world – the sooner this happens the greater the benefit. Embracing uranium once the climate has changed is not a clever strategy.

d) The regulatory environment for uranium is politically oriented and over zealous. It panders to the green movement and is not based on serious science or logic. Mining of any heavy metal has environmental ramifications. The mining industry is already over regulated but it adapts as best it can - in uranium's case it is swamped. The environmental/indigenous/regulatory/ legal/compensation regime that engulfs mining is rapidly increasing. We are approaching the USA in this regard where several states have essentially banned mining altogether. I fear that what has been used to tie up the Australian uranium industry will not be slackened but extended to the rest of the industry.

In regard to other issues mentioned;

1) In mining, one generations waste is an others treasure. For example the cyanide laden tailings at Kalgoorlie were seen as an horrendous hazard when they were originally mined but they have since been reworked for profit several times by succeeding generations. Uranium is no different and the rare earth rich tailings at Mary Kathleen will be reworked one day as will the rare earth iron rich tailings and waste at Olympic Dam.

The orderly underground storage of nuclear waste products will be a future treasure trove to the countries/states that have the courage and foresight to be seen as a current 'dumping ground'.

2) Aboriginal people have been shamelessly used and abused by the anti-development lobby. Once a fallacious idea has been implanted no amount of discussion will dissuade. Aborigines and other local groups should not be put in a position where they can hold up or blackmail project developments that benefit Australia.

- 3) Radiation monitoring is essential but allowable levels should be based on multiples of natural background levels. Expecting a mine to have radiation levels below background is ludicrous and is just another tool to smother the industry. Similarly, asbestos levels near an asbestos mine cannot be expected to be lower than natural levels elsewhere.
- 4) Regulation by the Commonwealth is unnecessary. Uranium should be treated at the State level as with other minerals.
- 5) Infrastructure assistance is given to mining in many parts of the world so that mines can be competitive in the world wide market and the respective country can reap the rewards of primary production.
- 6) Nuclear plants have been burning surplus warheads for the last 10 years and have effectively been making the world safer. Nuclear proliferation is still with us but it is a major undertaking for a small country and is monitored by the United Nations etc. A more serious threat is perhaps the purchase of complete weapons from corrupt ex-soviet countries.
If Australian 'obligate radioactive material' is stored in a central controlled facility then the 'dirty bomb' scare campaigners will have to come up with a better reason for disbanding all things nuclear.

The general level of understanding of radiation and radioactive processes in Australia is poor. Education and enlightenment on nuclear matters needs to be addressed at both the school and general public levels.

your's sincerely

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