

**Submission to Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Inquiry into proposed Uranium Sales to China**

7 September 2006

Dear Sir/Madam,

I oppose uranium sales to China for the reasons outlined below:

1. China has a poor reputation in regards to nuclear weapons. It has not signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, or any multinational agreements on arms export control.
2. Australia says it will rely on international safeguards to ensure its uranium is used for safe purposes. IAEA's safeguards are considered by many experts to be inadequate and the Australian Government should not be content to simply rely on them.
3. It is problematic and probably not enforceable or effective to make a distinction in export controls between peaceful and non-peaceful use of uranium. I understand the industry is not structured along a clear division. I note that four or five countries have used supposedly peaceful nuclear programs for the purpose of nuclear weapons.
4. China has insufficient uranium to cater for both its civil and military programs. Therefore Australian uranium will simply free up Chinese uranium for military purposes, and in this way exporting Australian uranium allows for more proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (ie nuclear weapons) regardless of whatever standards are imposed by Australia on these exports. Even bilateral agreements will provide no guarantee that Australian uranium won't allow diversion of other Chinese uranium.
5. Even if a bilateral agreement did contain such a clause, there is inadequate basis for considering that China would abide by such obligation. China's conduct has done little to engender trust in ensuring safeguards and international standards are met. Its human rights record speaks for itself. China is responsible for 5 out of every 6 executions in the world. It has not signed up to human rights and labour protection conventions. It has no whistle blower protection, as demonstrated by the case of Sun Xiaodi who was abducted in April 2005 after speaking with foreign journalists about uranium mining in China. Australia should stand up for the democratic and international standards that we as a nation espouse and refuse to sell uranium to China whilst such state of affairs exists in China.
6. The main driver to China's increased nuclear weapons program is the US so-called 'missile defence program'. Australia supports this US initiative, and so Australia is in effect helping to spur China's objective to increase its nuclear weapons capacity, and if we sell uranium to them, allowing China to actualise that objective. That is poor foreign policy, given Australia's previous and current policy stance on nuclear weapons, and the wishes of most Australians (as revealed by a range of surveys and newspolls that demonstrate the public's dislike for nuclear proliferation)
7. Selling uranium to China sets a poor precedent. If we can sell it to China, there would be few countries, perhaps none, whom we could not sell it to.
8. Australia should lever its wealth in uranium to obtain a more useful objective, like bolster conventions and agreements on nuclear weapons/power. This could involve confronting the US about its refusal to sign the CTB Treaty, for instance.
9. The argument that "If Australia don't export it to China, someone else will" should have little persuasive weight. It lacks an ethical foundation.

Australia should consider, for the above reasons, that on balance it is more in the long term interests of Australia (and the world) to not export uranium to China. The countervailing benefits for Australians are merely short term economic gains, which are small in themselves (uranium accounts for .33% of total export revenue-\$573million).

Marc Allas

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