

Submission to the Parliamentary Enquiry re Uranium Sales to the Chinese Regime.
By Rosalind Byass. Convenor Stawell Friends of the Earth.

I oppose the sale of uranium to China for the reasons outlined below.

Introduction:

On reading the published Agreement of the sale [not yet in force] I find the difficulty I had comprehending the content disconcerting. I needed to read the article several times as it seemed ambiguous. The fact that so few Australians are scholars of China and fluent in the language, leaves me wondering if the content of the agreement is actually understood by the Australian signatories. Depending on Chinese Nationals as translators would be totally unacceptable.

Inadequate Safeguards:

I have read most articles that have been available on the nuclear debate over the past 30 years and although I am opposed to the nuclear industry at this point in time, I am not necessarily opposed to it indefinitely. If there could be no possible breach of security, [neither accidental, geographical or hostile]; a truly strong United Nations; that world peace was a certainty, safeguards absolute and nuclear by-products safely contained, I would consider that some development may be proper. This time is obviously well into the unforeseeable future.

Exacerbating insecurity:

Meanwhile the planet earth is under enormous stress from carbon-dioxide overload, leading to climate chaos. Terrorism is being drilled into the Western worlds psyche relentlessly. Regular third world poverty; threatening pandemics and clash of civilizations continue to challenge the best of world leaders. Any increase in nuclear material makes our world unnecessarily more volatile. The sale of uranium to China is an opportunistic move to exploit the high demand at the moment. It is for profit of a few with little promise of improving Australian wellbeing at all.

Human Rights:

China has a disastrous human rights record.. The Chinese Culture should be studied thoughtfully before this Transfer of Nuclear Materials is given final approval. Can transparency of the agreement be guaranteed in the future? The Chinese have a reputation of being obedient to their regime, particularly public servants.

Chinas Military Exports:

China sells arms to countries we are being told are unstable and liable to conflict. Pakistan Korea Iraq are hardly soul mates of Australia. Also the sale of uranium may be exacerbating the explosive truce between China & Taiwan; this in turn leaves Australia, a close ally of the US in an invidious and dangerous position.

Although the agreement asks for none of our uranium to be used for explosive outcomes there is no physically practical way of ensuring this. Even if our uranium is only used for power production obtaining an external source of uranium may release China's domestic supply for weaponry.

Conclusion:

The world has enough hot spots. The Nuclear power industry has a byproduct of plutonium. Plutonium makes dirty bombs. Depleted uranium leaves soldiers and civilians

sick and dependent. The safe storage of nuclear waste is yet to be developed. There is no safe storage facility at this point in time. There are many sustainable ways of producing power and if research and development of these is reasonably funded the future global environment may not be bleak. Let us develop good ties with China based on sound trade principles for mutual benefit.