

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Nuclear Prohibition

Ms Kim Grierson
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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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I wish to voice my opposition to any change to nuclear prohibition laws in Victoria. The Victorian legislation was brought in to protect this State's agricultural land and ocean coast from polluting mining industries. South Gippsland is particularly rich in thorium and so the laws must stay in place.

There is absolutely no point in investigating the potential for Victoria to contribute to low carbon dioxide energy production through enabling exploration and production of uranium and thorium.

These activities will only produce energy if the uranium or thorium is used in a nuclear power plant which would have first to be built. Nuclear new builds across the world are declining as they are too high risk, take too long to approve and to build and recent experiences have been fraught with delays and cost overruns- cost overruns of an already expensive undertakings. A new build might take 10-15 years to build and cost many billions. We can move to a low carbon electricity system for a fraction of the cost in a fraction of the time with renewables and storage.

The technologies of wind, solar and storage are viewed by CSIRO and the Australian Energy Market Operator as, by far, the cheapest form of low carbon options for Australia, and will continue to dominate the global energy mix in coming decades.

Victoria has significant wind and solar resources and the energy can be provided quickly, at a fraction of the cost, and with less risk and less upset to the voting public. They have no waste to dispose of and no massive rehabilitation bill at the end of life.

There are huge barriers to participation in the nuclear fuel cycle but these barriers come from the industry itself, including:-

1. The cost of nuclear power is very high and far higher than the cost of renewables. Who will want to pay far more for power? Certainly not Victorians. Not when they can have power from renewables at about a fifth of the cost of nuclear.
2. Nobody wants to live near a nuclear power station or have nuclear waste driven along their streets. Where does the nuclear lobby propose to locate this power station? There will be considerable resistance to such a power station which may make it impossible to go ahead.
3. The risk profile is far higher than the very safe renewables. The Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority (NRPA) revealed that thorium-based nuclear energy plants – once vaunted as a clean alternative type of nuclear energy – is not an environmentally safe alternative. Thorium leads to highly radioactive nuclear waste. Consequently, the risk of accidents will always be present the report said.

4. Highly radioactive nuclear waste presents a huge barrier especially as no long term waste storage solution has yet been provided for medical and other waste from Lucas Heights.
5. Uranium mining has widespread effects, contaminating the environment with radioactive dust, radon gas, water-borne toxins, and increased levels of background radiation.
6. Nuclear power relies on very large amounts of water, more even than coal. Renewables use none and so in time of drought offer more reliability.
7. Nuclear is far more vulnerable to bushfire than renewables.
8. Nuclear is centralised power whereas renewables can be more distributed and allow the development of microgrids which provide resilience during disasters such as severe storms.
9. Nuclear power stations have a limited life span. Rehabilitation of the site and of the mines is very expensive. Whereas solar and wind can be upgraded or moved. Californian windfarms have been operating since the 1970's. Turbines get replaced once they reach the end of their useful life. A turbine in Newcastle NSW was moved (to facilitate the extension of a coal loader!) to Tasmanian and put into operation there.

The negative affect on agriculture and tourism industries could be considerable whereas renewable technologies can coexist. It seems clear that there are no economic, environmental or social benefits for Victoria in participating in the nuclear fuel cycle. Any minimal advantage in the medical realm might be undone by the potential for damage to agricultural land and nearby populations from mining.

Nuclear proponents often propose a carbon price which they need because of the poor economics of this industry.

Yours sincerely,
Kim Grierson

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File1:

File2:

File3: