



Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen
Minister for Public Works and Procurement

Our Ref: MN02067-2023
Your Ref: A1063807

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23 March 2023

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
By email: clerksoffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 27 February 2023 in relation to e-petition number 3831-22. I am writing to provide a response in accordance with Standing Orders.

The petition seeks to have Parliament remove all state legislative barriers to the use of nuclear power and facilities in Queensland. It also seeks to encourage the State Government to work constructively with the Federal Government to secure opportunities for nuclear power to be built in Queensland. In its contextual statement, the petition says there is a global shift toward nuclear power to provide a reliable source of clean energy as the world transitions away from fossil fuels.

The legislation the petition refers to is the *Nuclear Facilities Prohibition Act 2007*. Passed more than 15 years ago, it was intended to send a clear message that a nuclear power industry is not supported in Queensland. The purpose of this legislation is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of Queensland. Since then, the government has kept abreast of inquiries and reports in Australia about the feasibility of nuclear energy as a fuel source but has yet to see evidence that would prompt a revision of that policy.

A number of inquiries into nuclear issues in Australia over the years have considered its potential and identified key impediments to nuclear energy. They include:

- the cost of nuclear energy is significantly more than alternative forms of power generation (renewable, storage and fossil fuel)
- the potential impact of radioactive waste disposal on the environment and the health of workers and communities
- the actual and perceived risks of nuclear energy, and who bears those risks
- lack of community acceptance of these risks and impacts.

In particular, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) in 2019 assessed current large-scale nuclear power plant technology as not having sufficient flexibility to complement the increased uptake of renewable energy. While AEMO considered the small modular reactor (SMR – generally generating 300 megawatts or less) technology as promising a greater degree of flexibility, there were insufficient SMRs operating globally to assess their true capabilities.

Even if SMRs could deliver sufficiently lower costs, safety and flexibility in order to compete with pumped hydro, batteries or green hydrogen (ie. other 'dispatchable' energy technologies), it would not address the community's concerns about the risks and impacts of nuclear power and its waste.

Given the scope of available alternative energy technologies with significantly less community concerns, impacts and risks as compared to nuclear energy, there is insufficient rationale at this stage for revisiting the prohibition.

If I can help with other matters within my portfolio, please contact my office on (07) 3719 7270.

Yours sincerely



Mick de Brenni MP
Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen
Minister for Public Works and Procurement