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UPDATE: NUCLEAR ENERGY AND AUSTRALIA

On 4 March 2020, the Standing Committee on State Development released a report on its inquiry into the *Uranium Mining and Nuclear Facilities (Prohibitions) Repeal Bill 2019*. The bill seeks to remove State-based prohibitions on uranium mining and the construction and operation of nuclear facilities in the Australian State of New South Wales.

Committee findings

The committee made several key findings in its report, including that:

- *Securing affordable, sustainable and reliable baseload power now and into the future is essential to powering the State's manufacturing and other energy-intensive industries* (Finding 2).
- *Wind and solar firmed with gas, batteries and pumped hydro would not be an adequate solution to meet State's future needs for affordable and reliable electricity following the decommissioning of ageing coal fired generation assets* (Finding 3).
- *Nuclear power is a compelling technology, which would be useful in energy policy which seeks to address the three dimensions of the energy trilemma* (listed as environmental sustainability, energy security and affordability and equity) (Finding 4).
- *Emerging nuclear technologies, in particular Generation III/III+ and Generation IV benefit from significant advancements in safety and design and are considerably safer than other forms of electricity generation in the level of risk that they pose to human health and the environment* (Finding 6).

Committee Chair, the Hon Taylor Martin MLC, summarised the committee's findings in his foreword to the report, by stating that "the committee could find no compelling justifications from an environmental or human safety point of view which would warrant the blanket exclusion of nuclear energy, especially in its emerging small scale applications, from serious policy consideration in New South Wales".

Committee recommendations

The committee recommended that the NSW Government supports the repeal of the Uranium Mining and Nuclear Facilities (Prohibitions) Act 1986 in its entirety and pursues the repeal of the Commonwealth prohibitions on nuclear facilities. The committee also recommended that the NSW Government commissions further research into the economic viability of nuclear energy and workforce capabilities and skills gap analysis. According to the committee, broader community education initiatives about nuclear energy should be undertaken by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation and both entities should monitor the status of commercialisation of small modular reactors in the United States and elsewhere.

Other Australian inquiries into nuclear energy

The committee's report follows a Federal inquiry into the prerequisites for nuclear energy, which concluded in December 2019, and recommended the Federal Government lift the moratorium on nuclear energy to allow for consideration of Generation III+ and Generation IV nuclear technology (including small modular reactors), subject to a commitment to community consent. A similar inquiry is currently ongoing in the Australian State of Victoria, with the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning yet to release its report.

Further information

The [NSW committee report](#) and the [Federal report](#) are available online.