



The Potential For Nuclear Power In Australia

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While President Trump was last night finalising his Paris withdrawal announcement, in Melbourne the IPA was hosting an event on nuclear power in honour of the visiting Director of Energy at The Breakthrough Institute in the US, [Jessica Lovering](#).

Jessica is currently on a brief tour around Australia courtesy of one of Australia's most fearless and influential organisations, the Minerals Council of Australia.

A nuclear policy expert, Jessica has been highlighting how the next generation of smaller-scale nuclear reactors currently under development can be factory-built, don't need water for cooling, and are able to better adjust output to demand, clearly giving nuclear the potential to revolutionise the electricity industry.

Her visit couldn't have come at a better time.

With an estimated 30% of the world's uranium, Australia should be a world leader in uranium



mining and technology, as well as nuclear energy. In a world currently obsessed with global warming, a power source that generates no carbon dioxide emissions should also be a no-brainer.

Yet Australia only has the one nuclear medicine reactor (Lucas Heights in NSW), and no nuclear power stations.

Incredibly, in the 21st century, two separate pieces of Commonwealth legislation (the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act](#) and the [Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act](#)) specifically prohibit nuclear fuel fabrication, power, enrichment or reprocessing facilities.

It gets worse. In 2015 the newly elected Palaszczuk Labor Government in Queensland reinstated the ban on uranium mining which its Newman LNP predecessor had only just revoked (though confusingly a company can still explore, it just can't mine it) and in [Victoria](#) a 34-year old Act of Parliament bans even exploration. Western Australia's newly-elected Labor Government has also promised to ban new uranium mines.

Just as you wouldn't expect 1980s fashion designers to influence your choice in clothes today, allowing ageing 1980s nuclear disarmament activists to influence 21st century energy policy is a throwback we could do without.

In its [submission](#) to last year's Senate Environment Committee Inquiry into Australian Coal-Fired Power Stations, the IPA said that "electricity systems exist to provide safe, reliable and affordable power to consumers and to businesses" and that "the role of government should only be to support competition and private sector innovation in energy markets."

The IPA also said in its submission that government could work with BHP to establish Australia's first nuclear power station in South Australia to power BHP's Olympic Dam mine as well as feed reliable electricity into the South Australian grid. Or even trial a small nuclear reactor to work in conjunction with a proposed South Australian nuclear waste facility as referenced in a proposal submitted to the [recent](#) Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission.

It is national scandal that Australia's unofficial '[no nukes, no gas, no coal and no dams](#)' policy has led the world's biggest mining company to put the expansion of Olympic Dam on hold to the detriment of thousands of additional jobs in a state that desperately needs them, because it is unable to access reliable electricity.

All legislative prohibitions on uranium exploration and mine development, as well as nuclear enrichment, processing and power should be revoked. Nuclear technology should be allowed to compete alongside coal, gas, renewables and whatever else evolves in coming years for a place in the Australian energy mix.