

Public Health Association of Australia:

Policy-at-a-glance – Nuclear Industry Policy

Key message:

1. That all Australian governments should introduce a no further uranium mining policy in their jurisdictions and the Commonwealth Government should introduce policy to not grant any further uranium export licences.
2. The Australian government should not renew uranium export licences for existing mines which produce uranium on expiry of current contracts.
3. That the Commonwealth government should maintain a policy of no nuclear power generation, and should commence the closure of the Lucas Height Nuclear Reactor.
4. That the locating of any radioactive waste management facility should only proceed with full and informed local community and relevant State and Territory consent- this includes communities through which waste is proposed to be transported.
5. In line with international trends that Australia move to non-reactor based sourcing of nuclear medicine isotopes and that the Australian government support research and development in alternative isotope production and diagnostic technologies.

Summary: There are public health risks associated with the nuclear chain, particularly in relation to nuclear power generation and reprocessing. This policy seeks to outline a series of principles and tangible actions designed to mitigate these risks.

Audience: Australian, State and Territory Governments, policy makers and program managers.

Responsibility: PHAA's Ecology and Environment Special Interest Group (SIG)

Date policy adopted: September 2013

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Nuclear Industry policy

The Public Health Association of Australia notes that:

1. There are public health risks associated with the nuclear chain (mining, processing, nuclear power, waste and weapons proliferation) particularly in relation to nuclear power generation and reprocessing.^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.}
2. There is no known safe levels of exposure to ionising radiation to avoid health risks.⁷
3. The links all along the nuclear chain between the nuclear power industry, waste production, nuclear weapons proliferation and hence the risk of nuclear war, are inextricable.
4. In a time of environmental degradation and climate change, the threat of nuclear weapons makes the disengagement from the nuclear industry one of the highest priorities for protecting humanity, complex society and the environment.¹⁸
5. The consequences to the environment of the nuclear chain include increased radioactive contamination of the environment.⁸
6. The risks of radioactive spillage and environmental contamination, however low, are inherent in transporting nuclear waste.⁹
7. Nuclear power is not the solution to mitigate global warming.^{10, 11, 12, 15, 16}
8. In an age of increasing globalisation and political tension, nuclear facilities provide a source of nuclear material for terrorists to use in weapons.^{12, 13, 14}
9. There is a greater risk of adverse impact on Indigenous people in Australia, as elsewhere, from the nuclear industry. Because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are already the most disadvantaged group in Australia, and less likely to benefit from the nuclear industry, their voices should be actively listened to on nuclear industry issues.¹⁹

The Public Health Association of Australia affirms the following principle that:

10. Expansion of the nuclear industry is not in the best interests of the health of people in Australia or globally.

The Public Health Association of Australia believes that the following steps should be undertaken:

11. That all Australian governments should introduce a no further uranium mining policy in their jurisdictions and the Commonwealth Government should introduce policy to not grant any further uranium export licences.
12. The Australian government should not renew uranium export licences for existing mines which produce uranium on expiry of current contracts. Where uranium is extracted in conjunction with other minerals, ongoing mines should rebury it.
13. That the Commonwealth government should maintain a policy of no nuclear power generation, and should commence the closure of the Lucas Height Nuclear Reactor.
14. That the locating of any radioactive waste management facility should only proceed with full and informed local community and relevant State and Territory consent- this includes communities through which waste is proposed to be transported.
15. In line with international trends that Australia move to non-reactor based sourcing of nuclear medicine isotopes and that the Australian government support research and development in alternative isotope production and diagnostic technologies.¹⁷

The Public Health Association of Australia resolves to undertake the following actions:

The Public Health Association of Australia will:

16. oppose expansion of all aspects of the nuclear industry in Australia, in particular mining and waste disposal from overseas.
17. oppose the location in the absence of community approval of any radioactive waste management facility.
18. collaborate with other organisations with similar aims.
19. act to further implement its related policy on Climate Change.

ADOPTED 2013

This policy was originally developed and adopted as part of the 2010 policy review process. Reviewed and re-endorsed in 2013.

References:

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- 19 Statement of the PreCongress 'Sacred Land, Poisoned Peoples' to the 19th IPPNW World Congress *Rebecca WingfieldBear (Australia) and Charmaine White Face (USA) to the Closing Plenary, August 29, 2010, at the University of Basel, in Basel, Switzerland.*