

INSC Country Report

Country: Australia

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1. Political situation in nuclear in your country

Australia has a change of Government following an election on 7 September 2013 when the Liberal/National Coalitions won a clear majority of votes. The new government will update the Energy White Paper which will develop the national energy policy. The previous Energy White Paper gave minimal consideration to the nuclear option. Although the new government has no plans to introduce nuclear power in Australia, it is hoped that there can be a more reasoned discussion of the nuclear option.

Australia has four operating mines (Ranger, Olympic Dam, Beverley and Honeymoon). In 2012, Australia was the world third-ranking producer after Kazakhstan and Canada.

Uranium mining is becoming less controversial in Australia. On 12 September 2013, the Queensland State government released an action plan to recommence uranium mining in Queensland and expects to have all the necessary guidelines and policies in place to assess applications for uranium mining, transport and export by July 2014. The New South Wales government has lifted a 26-year ban on the uranium exploration in NSW. Western Australia is due to have its first uranium mine when Toro Energy's Wiluna mine following final environment approvals granted in April 2013. Subject to project financing and uranium market support, Toro is targeting first uranium sales in 2016.

2. News on nuclear facilities (NPP's, WSF's etc.) in your country (power upgrades, lifetime extensions, new build etc.)

Australia has a research reactor (OPAL 20 MW) but no nuclear power plants. The OPAL reactor uses low enriched uranium (LEU) fuel to achieve a range of nuclear medicine, research, scientific, industrial and production goals.

3. News on member companies (projects, financial results, production etc)

4. Public opinion towards nuclear (results latest PO polls)

At the Federal level, the Australian uranium mining industry has in recent years enjoyed political support from both sides of Federal politics. Although, some State governments previously opposed even exploration for uranium, elections in the past few years have resulted in new governments in the major uranium resource States which have removed most barriers to uranium mining. Nevertheless, gaining approval for new uranium mining operations is still a lengthy process.

Currently the public discussion on nuclear power issues in Australia is a relatively low level. A recent survey in 2012 (Bird et al, Energy Policy, Science Direct 3 Oct 2013) found that only 40% of respondents were *not* willing to accept nuclear power as an option to help tackle climate change, despite the fact that most Australians still believed nuclear power to offer a cleaner, more efficient option than coal, which currently dominates the domestic production of energy [34% were willing to accept nuclear under these conditions and 26 % had no opinion]. Public opposition to nuclear power will continue to be an obstacle against its future development even when posed as a viable solution to climate change.

5. Stakeholder dialogue (Attitudes of NGOs, media, local communities towards nuclear)

An Australian Academy of Technological Science and Engineering (ATSE) conference (25-26 July 2013) on "Nuclear Energy for Australia?" was attended by about 200 participants. The Conference Communiqué found that nuclear is a viable technology for Australia, Australia must be prepared, social and political acceptance is crucial, nuclear reduces emissions and nuclear risks are well studied and manageable. The ATSE conference received good media coverage.

BFJ/wmd

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