



Friends of the Earth Adelaide

c/- Conservation Council of SA, 55 Exchange Place, Adelaide SA 5000
adelaidefoe.org | facebook.com/foe.adelaide | e: adelaide.office@foe.org.au

Submission to AUKUS Public Inquiry

Friends of the Earth Adelaide

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1. Introduction

Friends of the Earth Adelaide appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to this important inquiry. We have decades of experience regarding nuclear waste management issues and debates in Australia and have chosen to focus on those problems, insofar as they relate to AUKUS, in this submission. Lead authors Dr Jim Green and Dr Philip White would welcome the opportunity to expand on the issues raised in this submission at the July 16 hearing in Adelaide.

By rights, the parliament should conduct a genuine public review of the AUKUS program, given that it commits Australian taxpayers to spending hundreds of billions of dollars for decades to come with dubious benefit to our security in return. In the absence of an official inquiry, we hope that this independent inquiry will shine a light on the many issues that should have been considered before the government committed Australia to AUKUS.

The first hearing, held in Melbourne on 11 June, received many high-quality presentations. Most of the points that we would make were covered in that hearing. In particular, we would like to endorse the comments made by the expert witnesses: Gareth Evans, Tilman Ruff, Richard Tanter, John Lander, Joseph Camilleri, Rod Campbell and Dave Sweeney. Their critiques of the flaws in AUKUS align with ours, including in regard to the following:

- sacrifice of Australian sovereignty,
- negative impact on national security,
- opportunity cost,
- questionable industrial and employment benefits,
- safety risks and environmental cost,
- challenge of managing and disposing of radioactive waste, including foreign-sourced waste,
- negative impact on First Nations people,
- nuclear proliferation and safeguards implications of military reactors powered by highly enriched uranium fuel,
- implications for our obligations under the Treaty of Rarotonga of 'rotation' through Australian bases of nuclear weapon-capable vessels and aircraft, and

- the uncertainty that nuclear-powered submarines will even be delivered.

We do not intend to repeat all the arguments presented in Melbourne and will just add a few perspectives by way of elaboration on what the inquiry has already heard. Then we will expand on nuclear waste issues in greater depth.

2. National Security

As articulated by witnesses at the public hearing in Melbourne, AUKUS is not in Australia's best security interests. In fact, it makes Australia less safe. That conclusion begs the question, "What would a better national security strategy look like?" Perhaps most people would immediately ask whether conventionally-powered submarines would be preferable, or whether we should rather focus on uncrewed underwater vessels. While alternative military equipment and military posture are important considerations, they are not the first thing that should be assessed. Before drawing up a list of alternative military expenditures, Australia should develop a true national security strategy which considers national security from a broader perspective than just military security. Military security is a subset of that – we would argue not even the most important subset.

Without wishing to diminish the military threat that may be posed by potentially hostile nations, the consequences of climate change for Australia's national security and the security of the Australian public are greater and are already being felt now. This is cogently argued by the Australian Security Leaders Climate Group, of which this public hearing's commissioner Admiral Chris Barrie is a member.¹ The personal and economic costs of floods, droughts and fires are only going to get worse over the coming decades. There are also other important security issues. For example, the potential damage from cyberattacks is growing apace, especially with the rapid advances in AI. While there are potential linkages between military security and cyber security, as well as energy, water and food security, to a large extent these vital national security issues cannot be solved militarily. Also, terror attacks on Australian soil are now a reality.

All these security issues need to be considered in the context of 'human security'. The focus on military security to the exclusion of these other issues reflects a combination of outdated conceptions of national security, bureaucratic structures with a vested interest in a military focus, and a fear of questioning Australia's relationship with the US. Ironically, the country that represents the greatest threat to Australia's security is the United States. The war that it (along with Israel) started with Iran has had a severe negative economic impact on Australia and the whole world. Unfortunately, both the Government and the Opposition are so strongly wedded to the military alliance with the US that they are unable to adapt to the changing international circumstances.

This public inquiry should call for the development of a comprehensive national security strategy based on 'human security', rather than detail alternative military equipment priorities.

¹ Australian Security Leaders Climate Group, 2025, *A Climate-First Foreign Policy for Australia: Human Security in the Age of Climate Disruption*: <https://www.aslsg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/ASLCG-ClimateFirstForeignPolicy.pdf>

3. Safety

The Australian Government has not been open with the public about the safety risks associated with nuclear-powered submarines. It seems to accept assertions by the US and the UK governments that the risk of a nuclear accident is vanishingly small. The United States Navy claims that its nuclear-powered submarines are safe.² However, the fact is that the longer they operate the more highly radioactive material accumulates in their reactors. Unlike civilian nuclear power plants, which have some of their spent fuel removed during regular outages, US and UK designed nuclear-powered submarines do not require refuelling. As a consequence, they keep accumulating radioactive material for the life of the submarine. Therefore, even though submarine reactors have a lower power output than standard civilian reactors, after they have been operating for a while they accumulate a substantial inventory of highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel.

Emergency planning is necessary to respond to potential accidents. In the case of port visits by foreign nuclear vessels, organisations including the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), the Department of Defence, and State and Territory authorities each play a role in planning and responding to accidents involving the release of radioactive material.³ According to the Department of Defence,

“1.4 The Australian Government requires contingency arrangements to be in place at all Australian ports visited by NPWs and also requires that there be the capability to undertake radiation monitoring of the port environment. These arrangements are formulated to cover two potential release mechanisms, which are failure or malfunction of radioactive waste control systems within the vessel and an accident involving the reactor plant.”⁴

It is welcome that the government acknowledges that radioactive material could potentially be released into the environment. But this risk was not considered when the decision was made to acquire nuclear-powered submarines. It is a risk that cannot be ignored by people living near the Osborne shipyard in South Australia, or the Stirling naval base in Western Australia.

There have been many safety issues with both the UK and the US naval nuclear propulsion programmes. There are nine nuclear submarines lying on the sea bed around the world. Two of those are US nuclear submarines. All on board were killed. These sunken submarines are unrecoverable. They will continue to decay until eventually their entire inventory of radioactive material is released into the environment. The fact that the nuclear-powered submarines that Australia plans to acquire are weapons of war only increases the possibility of that happening in Australian waters, because, in a war, that is precisely the outcome that the enemy would be trying to achieve.

The government does not tell the public about the consequences of the scenario where a nuclear vessel is attacked by a hostile foreign power. As mentioned by several witnesses at the Melbourne hearings, basing nuclear powered attack submarines (not to mention potentially nuclear armed foreign submarines) makes us a target. Secret New South Wales government documents tabled in NSW parliament on 15 May state that a proposed nuclear submarine base in Port Kembla “could

² Fact Sheet on U.S. Nuclear Powered Warship (NPW) Safety, April 2006
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/fact0604.pdf>

³ Department of Defence, 'Defence Operations Manual (Opsman 1): Visits to Australia by Nuclear-Powered Warships', Edition 11, 2023

⁴ Ibid.

be a target for Australian military adversaries”.⁵ The same would apply to Osborne and Stirling. As we witness the attacks on nuclear power plants during the war between Russia and Ukraine, as well as threats against Iran’s nuclear power plant, we are forced to recognise that attacks on nuclear facilities are not confined to the realm of fantasy. Inevitably, a hostile power would perceive Australian nuclear-powered submarines, operated in alliance with the United States, as a threat. We cannot rule out the possibility that such a hostile power might one day decide to attack an Australian nuclear-powered submarine, or a US or UK nuclear vessel while it is in an Australian port or in Australian coastal waters.

In regard to the UK nuclear submarine programme, a report by Tim Deere-Jones prepared for Friends of the Earth Australia cites numerous incidents involving collisions, sinking of civilian vessels (presumed sunk by ‘interactions’ with nuclear submarines), near misses, groundings, and radioactivity discharged from nuclear submarine bases.⁶ It contains numerous examples of safety incidents that the AUKUS governments would prefer the Australian public didn’t know about. The initial official response to these accidents and incidents is denial, until forced by evidence and public pressure to admit responsibility.

In short, the claim by the US, UK and Australian governments that they have ‘unmatched safety records’ should be recognised as propaganda. Even if the probability of a nuclear accident is low, the potential consequences could be catastrophic. The fact that there are grave risks is essentially acknowledged in the high “permissible radiation dose[s]” envisaged under the existing emergency response plans.^{7,8} Even if the perceived security benefits for Australia of nuclear-powered submarines were real, taking on such risks would outweigh those benefits.

We encourage Commissioners to invite independent researcher and campaigner Mr. David Noonan to present to the July 16 hearing in Adelaide and to consider his writings on AUKUS accident risks and inadequate emergency planning:

* His June 21 submission to this inquiry

* ‘AUKUS ‘impact assessment’ report ignores nuclear sub risks in SA’, *Pearls and Irritations*, 28 Feb 2025, <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2025/02/aucus-impact-assessment-report-ignores-nuclear-sub-risks-in-sa/>

* Submission re EPBC Act Impact Assessment Report on nuclear submarines at Port Adelaide / Osborne, Feb 2025, <https://nuclear.foe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Noonan-input-to-EPBC-Act-Impact-Assessment-Report-on-N-subs-Osborne-27-Feb-2025.pdf>

* ‘Flawed ‘assessment’ of Osborne / Port Adelaide nuclear submarine site ignores accident risk’, Feb. 2025, <https://nuclear.foe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Noonan-N-Sub-Consultation-Osborne-SA-Initial-Brief-8-Feb-2025.pdf>

⁵ Ben Doherty, ‘Secret documents reveal preferred Australian nuclear submarine base – and warn it could be a military target’, *The Guardian*, 16 May 2026

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2026/may/16/secret-documents-reveal-preferred-australian-nuclear-submarine-base-port-kembla>

⁶ Tim Deere-Jones, ‘The British Experience with Nuclear-Powered Submarines: Lessons for Australia’, August 2025 <https://nuclear.foe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Deere-Jones-nuclear-submarine-report-final-August-2025.pdf>

⁷ ARPANSA, ‘Guide for Radiation Protection in Emergency Exposure Situations – Planning, Preparedness, Response and Transition’, Radiation Protection Series G-3 Part 2, 30 May 2019

⁸ David Noonan, ‘Labor imposes AUKUS nuclear submarines while failing to inform the affected SA community of the health risks they face in a potential reactor accident’, 29 July 2024

<https://nuclear.foe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Noonan-Health-Risks-in-an-AUKUS-N-Sub-Reactor-Accident-Briefer-29-July-2024.pdf>

* 'Health Risks in an AUKUS N-Sub Reactor Accident', July 2024, <https://nuclear.foe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Noonan-Health-Risks-in-an-AUKUS-N-Sub-Reactor-Accident-Briefer-29-July-2024.pdf>

* 'Basing US N-Subs at Stirling puts WA at risk', Sept 2024, <https://nuclear.foe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Noonan-N-Subs-at-Stirling-WA-Sept-2024-1.pdf>

We encourage Commissioners to consider the submission by British scientist Tim Deere-Jones and to consider his August 2025 report, 'The British experience with nuclear-powered submarines: lessons for Australia'.⁹ The report details a litany of problems with the British nuclear submarine program including safety risks, cost blowouts and delays. Operational risks discussed in the report include radiological pollution of marine and coastal environments and wildlife; risks of radioactivity doses to coastal populations; and the serious risk of dangerous collisions between civilian vessels and nuclear submarines, especially in the approaches to busy naval and civilian sea ways and fishing grounds.

We encourage Commissioners to consider the submission to this inquiry by Dr. Tony Webb concerning radiological risks associated with the AUKUS submarine program, the looming weakening of radiation protection standards in the US and the consequences for Australia.

4. Employment

The South Australian Government is an enthusiastic supporter of AUKUS. It takes the view that it will be an industrial and employment bonanza for South Australia in general and the Port Adelaide area in particular. STEM programs in schools and professional courses in TAFE and university have been established focusing on nuclear submarines. We doubt whether most of the AUKUS jobs will materialise, in particular those promised for Osborne in connection with the construction of the AUKUS Class submarines. In view of the problems facing submarine construction in the UK, it is very doubtful whether nuclear-powered submarines will be built in Australia. As noted by former Labor foreign minister Gareth Evans at the Melbourne hearing, his successor former Liberal foreign minister Alexander Downer certainly doesn't think so. Those young people who believe they are lining up for secure submarine-related careers will be left high and dry.

We hope that Prof. Al Rainnie from Adelaide University has made a submission to this inquiry and that Commissioners will invite him to participate in the July 16 hearing in Adelaide. See also Prof. Rainnie's earlier work:

Al Rainnie, 'AUKUS and Jobs', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, #92, Dec 2023, <https://www.ppesydney.net/content/uploads/2023/12/16-Rainnie.pdf>

⁹ <https://nuclear.foe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Deere-Jones-nuclear-submarine-report-final-August-2025.pdf>

5. Radioactive Waste

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Storage and disposal of AUKUS nuclear waste

5.3 Free, prior and informed consent

5.4 Secrecy

5.1 Introduction

As a South Australian group, we are particularly concerned about the radioactive waste generated by nuclear-powered submarines. Our state has been the target of several unsuccessful attempts to find a site for a national nuclear waste dump (a.k.a. 'repository' or 'facility'). The State government responded by adopting the *Nuclear Waste Storage Facility (Prohibition) Act 2000* in order "to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of South Australia and to protect the environment in which they live by prohibiting the establishment of certain nuclear waste storage facilities in this State" (Article 3). Each attempt was vigorously opposed by local residents, including Traditional Owners. The most recent proposal was at Napandee near Kimba on the Eyre Peninsula. That proposal was officially abandoned in 2023 after a court upheld a challenge by the Barngarla people on the grounds that the decision to site the facility at Napandee was invalid due to apprehension of bias. Deep divisions in the community were created as a result of the whole process.

Despite the above-mentioned legislation, we have little faith in politicians to honour the consistent opposition of the South Australian public to nuclear waste dumps. The new Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulations explicitly over-ride various State and Territory laws, including the South Australian *Nuclear Waste Storage Facility (Prohibition) Act 2000* and we have not noticed any pushback from the State Government.

We call to mind the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission, which was established by the South Australian Government in March 2015 and reported in May 2016. It recommended that the South Australian Government remove the prohibition in the above-mentioned Act and "pursue the opportunity to establish used nuclear fuel and intermediate level waste storage and disposal facilities in South Australia". The concept was that these facilities would accept nuclear waste from around the world. This proposal was put to a SA Government-initiated Citizens Jury, which delivered its verdict in November 2016. It reported that two-thirds of the jury did not wish nuclear waste from other countries to be stored or disposed of in South Australia under any circumstances. Premier Jay Weatherill belatedly and begrudgingly abandoned the idea after the state Liberal Party refused to offer bipartisan support. He laid the blame on the Liberal Party and on flaws in the jury process, rather than on the flaws in the original proposal. Despite attempts to reassure the jury, they came up with a very clear majority against the storing of nuclear waste in South Australia. Whether it is for profit, or defence reasons, there is no suggestion that opinion has changed.

Based on these past experiences, we conclude that, rather than relying on politicians to protect South Australians from AUKUS radioactive waste, the safest way is to not produce the waste in the first place.

5.2 Storage and disposal of AUKUS nuclear waste

The AUKUS agreement commits Australia to accepting low-level radioactive waste generated during maintenance of both Australian AUKUS submarines and also US and UK submarines that are stationed at Australia's ports. The Australian Submarine Agency has been granted a site license for a facility to store and manage low level radioactive waste at HMAS Stirling Navy Base on Garden Island in Western Australia. In due course a similar facility will be required at Osborne in South Australia, the other site classified as a 'designated zone', and possibly at other 'designated zones' determined in future. Ultimately, a site for the permanent disposal of this waste will be required.

If Australia does in fact end up operating its own nuclear-powered submarines, it will eventually have to store and dispose of spent nuclear fuel, which is highly radioactive and dangerous for tens of thousands of years.

Besides spent nuclear fuel from Australian AUKUS Class submarines, Australia will be required to dispose of spent nuclear fuel from Virginia Class submarines purchased from the US. Given that the nuclear reactors are not refuelled during their operating lifetime, but remain in the submarines until they are decommissioned, Australia would have to dispose of both the spent fuel produced while the submarines were owned and operated by the US, as well as that produced while they were owned and operated by Australia. So, despite assertions to the contrary, Australia will be required to dispose of foreign origin spent nuclear fuel.

We fear that a site in South Australia could be chosen to host an AUKUS nuclear waste dump. Minister for Defence, Richard Marles, said in a 14 March 2023 press conference, "We will, in the course of the next year, announce a process by which that site will be identified ... we are committing to the fact that it will happen on Defence land, be it current Defence land or future Defence land." Over three years have elapsed since then, but no process has been identified. Marles promised that it will happen on Defence land, but that will not be very reassuring to Traditional Owners, who have fought previous radioactive waste dump proposals (including proposals to dump nuclear waste on Defence land in the NT and immediately adjacent to Defence land in SA). They know that even if their land is not Defence land now, it could be acquired by Defence in future.

The experience in Australia's AUKUS partner countries does not inspire confidence that Australia will be able to safely manage the task of disposing of high-level nuclear waste (spent nuclear fuel) – or to find any disposal option whatsoever. Worldwide, there is no operating repository for the disposal of high-level nuclear waste. There is one operating deep underground repository for long-lived intermediate-level nuclear waste – the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in the US state of New Mexico. However, the WIPP repository was shut for three years following a chemical explosion in an underground radioactive waste barrel in 2014.¹⁰ Safety and regulatory standards fell away sharply within the first decade of operation of the WIPP repository and those declining standards were directly responsible for the chemical explosion – a sobering reminder of the challenge of safely managing nuclear waste for millennia. Costs associated with the WIPP explosion are estimated at over A\$2.9 billion.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://nuclear.foe.org.au/wipp/>

¹¹ LA Times, 22 Aug 2016, 'Nuclear accident in New Mexico ranks among the costliest in U.S. history', <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-new-mexico-nuclear-dump-20160819-snap-story.html>

5.3 Free, prior and informed consent

In the worst case, where AUKUS goes ahead and a nuclear waste dump is required, any process for selecting a site should respect the wishes of Traditional Owners and adhere to the principles of free, prior and informed consent. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, to which Australia is a signatory, states:

“States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.” (Article 29, Clause 2)

This principle has not been followed in the search for a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility. Now the Commonwealth Government is seeking to commit Australia to storing and disposing of highly radioactive long-lived spent nuclear fuel from nuclear submarines. As mentioned above, several State and Territory governments, including South Australia, have laws or policies opposing the disposal of nuclear waste in their jurisdictions.¹² The Commonwealth should respect such prohibitions. It should not take the view that it can just ride roughshod over them and it should not take for granted that it will be able to find willing communities to host a site.

Returning to the issue of free, prior and informed consent, Dr. Marcos Orellana, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Toxics, visited Australia in 2023. The final report of the Special Rapporteur stated:¹³

“Indigenous Peoples have suffered grave maltreatment from radiation exposure due to nuclear testing, spraying of highly hazardous pesticides, uranium and other mining, and industrial activities with toxic impacts. The proposed siting of radioactive wastes on the lands of Indigenous Peoples illustrates the lack of respect for rights contemplated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

The Special Rapporteur’s recommendations included the following:¹⁴

“(a) Amend the National Radioactive Waste Management Act to explicitly reflect the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the right of free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples;

(b) Provide adequate compensation and assistance to those affected by radiation exposure from nuclear testing, particularly Indigenous Peoples;

(c) Provide further assistance to affected communities and further environmental remediation in relation to the atomic tests conducted by the British Government on Australian territory.”

Federal Parliament’s Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, in its November 2023 report on the Inquiry into the UNDRIP in Australia, recommended that the federal government ensure its approach to developing legislation and policy should be consistent with the UNDRIP and that a National Action Plan should be developed to implement, and assess compliance

¹² Emily Gibson, ‘Current prohibitions on nuclear activities in Australia: a quick guide’, Parliamentary Library, 30 May 2024

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/Research/Quick_Guides/2023-24/NuclearActivitiesProhibitions

¹³ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/57/52/Add.2>

See also <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5752add2-visit-australia-report-special-rapporteur-implications-human#:~:text=Summary,and%20recommendations%20to%20the%20Government>

¹⁴ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/57/52/Add.2>

with, the UNDRIP.¹⁵ The Committee further recommended that the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011 should be amended to include the UNDRIP in the definition of ‘human rights’ so that it be formally considered when scrutinising legislation.

Unfortunately, a significant roadblock to ending patterns of radioactive racism, and enshrining UNDRIP principles in legislation (including the principle of free, prior and informed consent), is the AUKUS project which is being pursued with no regard to the rights and interests of affected Aboriginal people.¹⁶ The federal Labor government has secured passage of legislation through parliament allowing it to impose any AUKUS-related facilities – including nuclear waste stores and dumps – on Aboriginal land without consultation or consent. State laws providing feeble Aboriginal heritage protections and land rights are overridden by new federal laws.

5.4 Secrecy

We hope that former senator and former submariner Rex Patrick contributes a submission to this inquiry and speaks to Commissioners at a public hearing. Among other issues, Mr. Patrick has drawn attention to the extreme and unjustifiable secrecy associated with the federal government’s plans to manage AUKUS waste – even going so far as to initiate a Federal Court appeal to overturn an FoI Administrative Review Tribunal decision.

The following articles (among others) detail the problems:

Rex Patrick, 7 June 2026, ‘FOI to die? Albanese’s nuclear strike on transparency’, <https://michaelwest.com.au/foi-to-die-albaneses-nuclear-strike-on-transparency/>
So adamant is the Albanese Government to keep AUKUS nuclear waste plans secret, they initiated a Federal Court appeal to overturn an Administrative Review Tribunal transparency win.

Rex Patrick, 20 April 2026, ‘Where are the AUKUS nuclear waste costings (let alone the dump sites)?’, <https://michaelwest.com.au/where-are-the-aukus-nuclear-waste-costings-let-alone-the-dump-sites/>
Defence is supposed to provide ‘cradle to grave’ costings for proposed capability before a procurement is approved. That doesn’t seem to have happened for AUKUS nuclear waste storage and disposal.

Rex Patrick, 16 Feb 2026, ‘Submarine boasts, yet nuclear waste dumps submersed in secrecy’, <https://michaelwest.com.au/submarine-boasts-yet-nuclear-waste-dumps-submersed-in-secrecy/>
With much fanfare, last week, Peter Malinauskas and Anthony Albanese announced a down payment on the \$30B shipyard being built for the AUKUS nuclear submarines, which will begin construction in Port Adelaide in 2040. Meanwhile, two senior government officials have told the Administrative Review Tribunal that the public they serve need to be kept in the dark on plans to deal with civil and AUKUS nuclear waste.

¹⁵

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Aboriginal_and_Torres_Strait_Islander_Affairs/UNDRIP/Report

¹⁶ <https://nuclear.foe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Noonan-AUKUS-N-sub-regulations-to-override-SA-laws-July-2025.pdf>

See also <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2023/05/aukus-nuclear-waste-dump-must-be-subject-to-indigenous-veto-right-link/>

Rex Patrick, 1 Dec 2025, 'Follow the money. A radioactive farce of failed land purchases', <https://michaelwest.com.au/follow-the-money-a-radioactive-farce-of-failed-land-purchases/>
The Federal Government is refusing to release any details of the land purchase for radioactive waste management.

Rex Patrick, 10 Oct 2025, 'AUKUS nuclear waste costs? Government: we know but we're not saying', <https://michaelwest.com.au/aukus-nuclear-submarine-waste-costs-were-not-saying/>
The Government has calculated preliminary costs for the treatment and storage of high-level radioactive waste from AUKUS submarines. They're just not willing to share the costs with those who have to pay for it.

Rex Patrick, 22 July 2025, 'Trillion dollar AUKUS subs plus nuclear waste in perpetuity?', <https://michaelwest.com.au/trillion-dollar-aukus-subs-plus-nuclear-waste-in-perpetuity/>
There was a short but insightful exchange in Senate Estimates last year between Senator Lidia Thorpe and the head of the Australian Submarine Agency (ASA), Admiral Jonathon Mead. Senator Thorpe asked about the waste costs for AUKUS, "There's no costing as yet; is that right?" Mead responded, "That's correct". For an organisation that is required to cost its capability from cradle to grave, including support facilities, it's a huge omission. It might be the case that they're too frightened to do the math.

Rex Patrick, 31 March 2025, 'Secret AUKUS nuclear waste site docs in Cabinet lockdown', <https://michaelwest.com.au/secret-aukus-nuclear-waste-site-docs-in-cabinet-lockdown/>
The Federal Government has successfully managed to bury, for twenty years, a report into how high-level AUKUS nuclear waste will be stored, and where.

Rex Patrick, 11 March 2025, 'Radioactive secrets. Fight to hide AUKUS nuclear waste sites gets absurd', <https://michaelwest.com.au/radioactive-secrets-fight-to-hide-aukus-nuclear-waste-sites-gets-absurd/>
Somewhere deep inside a locked government filing cabinet within Australia's labyrinthine Defence bureaucracy, there's a document intended to advise the Government on what locations in Australia might be suitable to store high-level nuclear waste and how to select one of those locations. The document in question is the result of a \$360,000 February 2023 contract to a company called SG Advice. The document is being held secret despite the obvious fact that a decision on a location for a high-level nuclear waste facility will be a decision with impacts which will last for millennia.

Rex Patrick, 3 Feb 2025, 'Nuclear waste. AUKUS agency's reckless indifference', <https://michaelwest.com.au/aukus-agency-reckless-on-nuclear-waste/>
The Australian Government has undertaken to accept responsibility for the spent nuclear fuel from our planned AUKUS submarines. The Government has announced that this high-level radioactive waste will be stored on Defence land. As reported by MWM, in February 2023, the Australian Submarine Agency awarded a contract for nearly \$400K to former Defence Department Deputy Secretary Steve Grzeskowiak to find a suitable Defence location. The very expensive irony that lurked behind this contract was the fact that Grzeskowiak had, when he was inside Defence, looked for a location on Defence land to store low-level radioactive waste and had been unable to find a suitable site.

Rex Patrick, 22 Nov 2024, 'AUKUS waste plans. The hitchhiker's guide to nuclear approvals', <https://michaelwest.com.au/aukus-waste-plans-the-hitchhikers-guide-to-nuclear-approvals/>

This week, I had a first direction hearing in the new Administrative Review Tribunal as I challenged the Albanese Government's secrecy around a report on how a future high-level nuclear facility site will be selected. It was refused to me under FOI. The Government refused to release the report on the basis that it is a cabinet document. However, now that we're in the big FOI league they're backing up their claim with other exemptions, including national security exemptions.

Rex Patrick, 17 Dec 2023, 'Marles is wrong – Australia is taking US and UK nuclear waste!', <https://michaelwest.com.au/defence-minister-richard-marles-is-wrong-australia-is-taking-us-and-uk-nuclear-waste/>

Marles' recent statement saying Australia will not be taking US or UK nuclear waste under the AUKUS program is plainly wrong and contradicted by his own Department.

Rex Patrick, 15 Dec 2023, 'Nuclear waste. Fifty years of searching, still nowhere to dump it', <https://michaelwest.com.au/nuclear-waste-fifty-years-of-searching-still-nowhere-to-dump-it/>
The Department of Defence has engaged a former Defence Deputy Secretary as a highly paid consultant to find a place on Defence land to store submarine nuclear waste.

During a Senate Inquiry, when Defence was asked if there was a suitable place on Defence land for a site, for example, the vast Woomera missile test range, they gave evidence that they had no land whatsoever on which to locate a low-level waste site.