

## **Civil Society faces imposition of an AUKUS military High Level nuclear waste dump**

*Updated Briefing by David Noonan, Independent Environment Campaigner 22 August 2024*

The Federal ALP belatedly [disclosed](#) a secret pre-condition in [AUKUS](#) plans to buy second hand US nuclear subs: for Australia to keep US N-Subs US origin military High Level nuclear waste forever.

In a breach of trust the ALP is seeking to 'normalise' High Level nuclear waste in Australia. Claims of '[nuclear stewardship](#)' in taking on US N-Subs and in retaining untenable US N-Sub wastes are a farce.

Disposal of High-Level nuclear waste is globally unprecedented, with our AUKUS 'partners' the US & UK having proven unable to do so in over 65 years since first putting nuclear powered subs to sea.

Minister for Defence Richard Marles MP has still not made a promised 'announcement', said to be by early 2024, on a process to manage High Level nuclear waste and to site a waste disposal facility, he [saying](#) "*obviously that facility will be remote from populations*" (ABC News 15 March 2023).

Defence is already working to identify potential nuclear waste storage and disposal sites, assessing existing Defence lands, and appraising potential regions with areas to compulsorily acquire a site.

**The public has a right to know who is already being targeted for imposed AUKUS N- waste storage.**

Political leaders in WA, Qld and Vic have already [rejected](#) a High-Level nuclear waste disposal site.

Our SA Premier has so far only said it should go to a safe 'remote' location in the [national interest](#).

**AUKUS compromises public confidence in Gov and sets up a serious clash with civil society:**

In setting the offer for a next Federal Election, Labor must become transparent and be made accountable over AUKUS and associated rights and interests that are at stake in Labor's intended High Level nuclear waste dump siting process. For instance:

- Federal and SA Labor must commit to comply with the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) Article 29 provision of Indigenous People's Rights to "Free, Prior and Informed Consent" over storage or disposal of hazardous materials on their lands.
- Defence must declare their intension to over-ride the SA [Nuclear Waste Storage \(Prohibition\) Act 2000](#) to impose an AUKUS nuclear dump on outback lands and unwilling community in SA.
- Federal Labor must fully set out the array of AUKUS nuclear wastes to be stored in Australia.

The [ALP National Platform](#) (2021, Uranium p.96-98) makes a commitment to oppose overseas waste:

- *Labor will: 8. d. Remain strongly opposed to the importation and storage of nuclear waste that is sourced from overseas in Australia.*

In contrast, AUKUS aims Australia buy existing US military nuclear reactors in second-hand N-Subs that are to be up to 10-12 years old, loaded with intractable US origin High-Level nuclear wastes that are also weapons usage fissile materials – and remain as Bomb Fuel long after decommissioning.

Further, in an affront to public trust Labor's AUKUS Bill has been written to provide a federal legal power to take existing US and UK N-Sub nuclear reactor wastes for storage and disposal in Australia.

Labor claims that it is not their 'policy' to do so – but it is their proposed Federal Law...

**Q: Is Federal Labor already targeting the Woomera Area in SA as a potential site to impose an AUKUS military High-Level nuclear waste dump?**

A [Labor AUKUS Bill](#) assumes a power and a right to over-ride State laws by naming State laws in Regulations that are to be made in 2025. Section 135 “Operation of State and Territory laws”, states:

*If a law of a State or Territory, or one or more provisions of such a law, is prescribed by the regulations, that law or provision does not apply in relation to a regulated activity.*

The Bill provides for regulated activities in ‘nuclear waste management, storage and disposal’ at AUKUS facilities in future nuclear zones, which are to be authorised in part under Sec.135.

The national press has reported the Woomera rocket range is understood to be the ‘favoured location’ for storage and disposal of submarine nuclear waste (“[Woomera looms as national nuclear waste dump site including for AUKUS submarine high-level waste afr.com](#) 11 August 2023).

A ‘[Review](#)’ of the Woomera Prohibited Area has just been announced by the Minister for Defence Richard Marles MP: “*to ensure it remains fit for purpose and meets Australia’s national security requirements.*” The Review is due to report in mid-2025 - after the federal election...

AUKUS will aim to compulsorily acquire and declare a High-Level nuclear waste dump site, with over-ride of State laws through this Bill, long before the 2032 first purchase of a second-hand US N-Sub.

It was left up to a US Vice Adm. Bill Houston to reveal the proposed sales of in-service Virginia-class subs will be in 2032 and in 2035, with a first new N-Sub in 2038 (US [Breaking Defence](#) 8/11/23).

If Federal Labor wants to locate an AUKUS nuclear waste dump in SA, it will have to over-ride our existing State Law to impose the dump. **This AUKUS Bill is a threat to the safety of the people of SA.**

Storage and disposal of nuclear wastes compromises the safety and welfare of the people of South Australia, that is why it is *prohibited* by the SA [Nuclear Waste Storage \(Prohibition\) Act 2000](#).

Labor Premier Mike Rann strengthen these laws in 2002 and now Federal Labor may over-ride them.

The Objects of this Act cover public interest issues at stake, to protect our health, safety and welfare:

*“The Objects of this Act are 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.”*

The import, transport storage and disposal of High-Level nuclear reactor waste is *prohibited* in SA.

However, Federal Labor are taking up legal powers to impose a dangerous AUKUS nuclear dump on SA or on the NT, through an undemocratic override of State laws and compulsory land acquisition.

**Question: Will Federal Labor also disregard Indigenous Peoples UN recognised Right to Say No?**

In the lead up to a federal election Labor must now declare if they will respect or ignore an Indigenous Right to Say No to an AUKUS nuclear waste dump on their country.

**South Australians have a democratic right to decide their own future & to Say No an AUKUS dump.**