

## **The people and environment of SA, WA and NT must be protected from Federal *imposed* storage of AUKUS High-Level nuclear waste:**

*Brief by David Noonan Independent Environment Campaigner, 06 March 2026.*

The Australian public have a **Right to Say No** to *undemocratic* new federal Labor powers to impose AUKUS High-Level nuclear waste, effectively *by decree*, across SA, WA and the NT.

AUKUS [Regulation 111](#) (02 Oct 2025) overrides protections in our existing State and Territory laws, and specifically names and prescribes SA and WA laws that *prohibit* High-Level nuclear waste storage. These draconian federal powers lack social licence and are an affront to civil society, they damage public trust in governance and are an ongoing threat to Aboriginal People's rights and cultural responsibility to protect their country.

The *Objects* of the SA [Nuclear Waste Storage \(Prohibition\) Act 2000](#) set out what is at stake: **"To protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of South Australia, and the environment in which they live"** by prohibiting certain nuclear waste storage facilities.

Community now face federal imposition of untenable and illegal AUKUS nuclear waste storage, see ["The lethal legacy of Aukus nuclear submarines will remain for millennia – and there's no plan to deal with it"](#) (The Guardian, 10 August 2025, Interview with Prof Ian Lowe).

### **Federal Labor has broken its commitment to announce a process for AUKUS waste storage:**

AUKUS Minister Richard Marles MP made a commitment to [announce a process](#) to identify a site to dispose of AUKUS nuclear wastes *by early 2024*. The failure by Defence to set out any process - other than to take up powers to *impose* nuclear wastes *by decree* - is unacceptable.

'Transparency warrior' [Rex Patrick](#) has brought to light: "A Brief on how to choose a location for AUKUS nuclear waste was provided to Defence Minister Richard Marles in Dec 2023", see ["Submarine boasts, yet nuclear waste dumps submersed in secrecy"](#) (MWM, 16 Feb 2026).

The public has a **Right to Know** what regions across SA, WA and the NT are being targeted for storage of AUKUS nuclear wastes. The secretive ongoing Defence review *"to identify potential nuclear waste disposal sites"* ([ABC News](#) March 2023) and the Brief must be made public.

The **Woomera Area** was reported to be a 'favoured location' for storage and disposal of nuclear sub wastes back in August 2023, see ["Woomera looms as national nuclear waste dump site including for AUKUS submarine high-level waste afr.com"](#). WA, Qld and Vic political leaders [rejected](#) a High-Level nuclear waste disposal site in their States in 2023. WA has suggested the Woomera Prohibited Area in SA: *"would be one obvious location within the Defence estate, however, we will await the outcomes of the federal review"* ([SMH](#) 15 March 2023).

### **Through AUKUS, federal Labor are 'normalising' and legitimising High-Level nuclear waste.**

Aspiring International nuclear waste dumpers [Tellus Holdings Ltd](#) that operates the Sandy Ridge waste repository in WA has partnered with Amentum UK to expand the [Chandler Project](#) in the NT. Amentum provides services to Pine Gap and was involved in the "Waste Isolation Pilot Plant" - the only nuclear geological repository in the US. In a Jan 2026 [submission](#) to a federal Inquiry Tellus offered to first take AUKUS & International Low-Level waste at Chandler.

**The public has a right to full disclosure in an informed debate *ahead* of AUKUS nuclear decisions. Silence by political leaders paves a path for an AUKUS nuclear dump agenda.**

**Min Marles wants to put a flag on US Navy High-Level nuclear wastes and ‘call it our own’:**

AUKUS Minister Marles aims Australia take on second-hand US Virginia Class nuclear powered subs in the early 2030’s loaded with US origin military High-Level nuclear fuel waste accrued in up to a dozen years of US Navy operations of US ‘High Enriched Uranium’ nuclear reactors.

Swapping an Australian flag onto this US military nuclear reactor waste places an untenable ‘for ever’ burden on future Australian generations to have to try to isolate these US nuclear wastes.

**Aboriginal People have a Right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent over AUKUS wastes:**

Q: Will our political leaders commit to respect and comply with Aboriginal People’s human rights, set out in the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) Article 29 (UNDRIP 2007), to “Free, Prior and Informed Consent” over storage of hazardous materials on their lands. AUKUS nuclear wastes absolutely are hazardous materials! Traditional Owners across SA, WA and the NT have repeatedly had to [Say No](#) to the imposition of nuclear wastes.

The SA Premier was called on to declare his position back in Dec and has so far not responded.

**SA Premier to let ‘national security interests’ decide the location for AUKUS nuclear waste:**

Premier Peter Malinauskas MP has said AUKUS nuclear waste should go to a ‘remote’ location in the “national security interest”, see [“Site for high-level nuclear waste dump under AUKUS deal must be in national interest. SA premier says”](#) (ABC News 15 March 2023).

The [Premier’s “Office for AUKUS”](#) (Letter, 07 Oct 2025) claims “safe and secure disposal” for High-Level nuclear waste, including spent fuel, produced when N-subcs are decommissioned. The Office expresses no concerns over globally unprecedented High-Level nuclear waste disposal, declines to reveal what is underway and yet expects “community acceptance”:

*“Determining suitable locations and methods for safe and secure disposal will take time, but Australia will do so in a manner that sets the highest standards ... and which builds community acceptance for a disposal solution.”*

Ahead of the SA Election the Premier has been called on to answer the Q: Will you accept or reject federal imposed storage of AUKUS nuclear waste in SA? so far there is no response.

**REPORTER:** Is a high-level nuclear waste dump the price that South Australia will have to pay for the jobs that go to the state? (Minister Marles [Press Conference](#) 14 March 2023)

**MARLES:** *Well, as I indicated there will be a process that we will determine within the next 12 months for how the site will be identified. You've made a leap there, which we're not going to make for some time. It will be a while before a site is ultimately identified.*

SA is left in the dark, without a say, as an ongoing target for an AUKUS nuclear waste dump.

**Scenario: AUKUS nuclear waste to ship into Whyalla Port to go north to the Woomera Area**

The Woomera Area is expected to be a target on a federal regional short list for an AUKUS nuclear dump site and Whyalla Port to be on a likely AUKUS nuclear waste transport route.

Rex Patrick has set out an array of potential locations and types of AUKUS nuclear waste facilities across Australia, see [“AUKUS waste in perpetuity”](#) (MWM, 22 July 2025).

**For further information:** see Friends of the Earth <https://nuclear.foe.org.au/nuclear-subcs/>