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Government of South Australia

Department of the Premier
and Cabinet

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Mr David J Noonan

Dear Mr Noonan

Thank you for your letter of 13 September 2025 to the former Deputy Premier about AUKUS. I have been asked to respond to you directly.

Australia has safely and securely managed nuclear activities decades, including 70 years of experience at facilities like its multi-purpose nuclear reactors at Lucas Heights, NSW. As a responsible nuclear steward, Australia will continue to ensure the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation safeguards are applied to this material, in accordance with Australia's domestic and international obligations, including the Treaty of Rarotonga.

Australia has committed that it will be responsible for the management, storage, and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste generated from its conventionally-armed nuclear-powered submarines. The safe and secure disposal of radioactive waste is a key part of the Government's commitment to the highest standard of nuclear stewardship. Australia will be supported by the UK and US, whose experience and advice will assist Australia in building this capability.

The US and UK's commitment to Australia responsibly building this capability is enshrined in the *Agreement Among the Government of Australia, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America for Cooperation Related to Naval Nuclear Propulsion (ANNPA)*.

The Commonwealth Government is establishing the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator (the Regulator) to implement the *Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Act 2024* (ANNPS Act) and assure nuclear safety and radiological protection for the environment and people.

From 1 November 2025, the Regulator will provide oversight of activities unique to naval nuclear power (NNP) – including NNP facilities, NNP materials and submarines – ensuring these activities are managed consistently under a single national framework that meets the highest international standards for safety and non-proliferation.

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The ANNPS Act establishes Designated Zones (at Osborne, SA and Garden Island, WA), with the Regulator being responsible for licencing and regulating naval nuclear activities within the boundary of the Designated Zone.

Designated Zones set the boundaries of the future Regulator, clearly defining its responsibilities and jurisdiction alongside those of Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) and State and Territory radiation regulators.

As you note in your correspondence, the ANNPS Act means some existing State legislation will not apply within the Designated Zone. This is consistent with the operation of the Australian Constitution.

Your correspondence also raises the matter of managing radioactive waste.

The Commonwealth Government is committed to the highest levels of nuclear stewardship, including the safe and secure disposal of radioactive waste as a result of Australia's Nuclear-Powered Submarines.

This includes low level radioactive waste generated by day-to-day submarine operations and maintenance (e.g. gloves, wipes, plastic bags, tape, personal protective equipment, pipes and valve caps). It also includes high-level nuclear waste, including spent fuel, which is produced when submarines are decommissioned at the end of their service life.

I can confirm that no decision has been made on a location within Australia for the disposal of intermediate, or high-level radioactive waste from nuclear-powered submarines. 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 for safety, security, and nuclear non-proliferation safeguards, and which builds community acceptance for a disposal solution.

Yours sincerely



Dylan Jones
Director
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The Department of the Premier and Cabinet acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the state's first people and nations, and recognises Aboriginal people as traditional owners and occupants of South Australian land and waters.

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