

NUCLEAR ENERGY AS A RESPONSE TO GLOBAL WARMING POLICY

The PHAA affirms its policy on Climate Change, and notes with concern the reduction in popular unease about nuclear energy. PHAA also notes increasing concern about carbon pollution, despite there being no developments in the nuclear industry to reduce the risks associated with the use of nuclear energy.

The Public Health Association of Australia notes:

1. The nuclear fuel process is unsafe; there are direct health and environmental consequences from radioactive leaks, there is potential contamination at all stages of the process and accidents occurring at nuclear reactor sites can result in massive releases of radioactivity.^{1,2,3,4,5} Since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001, the risk of threats of terrorist attacks on nuclear facilities cannot be regarded as negligible.⁵
2. Safe storage of nuclear waste is as yet unsolved and the industry is struggling to cope with existing waste; expansion of the industry will further compound waste problems.⁶
3. Given the poorly controlled link between nuclear power and nuclear weapons, any expansion of nuclear power could result in the potential for the proliferation of nuclear weapons.^{2,5}
4. Without government subsidy and in comparison to gas and even coal, nuclear power is not cost effective.² Renewable energy systems are becoming cost comparative and, with further investment and increased production, will become cheaper.⁵ Energy use reduction is an immediate strategy that would be eminently more cost effective.⁶
5. There are significant opportunity costs associated with expansion of the nuclear industry. Such expansion would divert much needed resources away from energy use reduction and from renewable energy system development and deployment.⁷
6. The nuclear industry does not have the capacity to expand rapidly enough to meet the projected needs. Even if it were to adopt best practice, the mining, processing and building of reactors will contribute significantly to the use of fossil fuel and the GHG emission.^{1,5} Reactors

have a limited life span, and must be eventually decommissioned, adding to the problems of energy utilisation and waste storage.⁸ Even advocates for nuclear energy note the lack of inherent economic, political and social attraction of nuclear energy, and thus need to call for consistent government incentives to promote nuclear energy⁹.

The Public Health Association of Australia recognises that:

7. Nuclear power is not the answer to reducing global warming.

Therefore, the Public Health Association resolves to:

8. argue against the adoption of nuclear power as a viable option to help mitigate global warming, in addition to other activities arising from the related PHAA policy on Climate Change.

References:

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