

MEDIA RELEASE

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Former security leaders urge scrapping of nuclear power plan that weakens Australia's security and increases climate risks

Australia should not proceed with the proposed plan for nuclear power stations due to the climate and security consequences they pose to the nation, according to a group of former Australian security leaders.

The Australian Security Leaders Climate Group (ASLCG) say that the nuclear plan creates high-value, vulnerable targets for missile warfare and sabotage, as well as perpetuating reliance on coal-fired power that would add two billion tonnes of emissions, derailing our climate targets.

"Every nuclear power facility is a potential dirty bomb because rupture of containment facilities can cause devastating damage," says the former Chief of the Australian Defence Force, Admiral Chris Barrie (Retd). "Modern warfare is increasingly focused on missiles and uncrewed aerial systems, and with the proposed power stations all located within a 100 kilometres of the coast, they are a clear and accessible target".

"In the Ukraine-Russia war, both sides have given strategic priority to targeting their opponents' energy systems, and Australia would be no different", says Cheryl Durrant, the former Director of Preparedness & Mobilisation, Australian Department of Defence. "So these nuclear facilities would necessitate expensive and complex missile defence systems as well as allocated cyber and counter-intelligence resources, making our security challenge more complex and expensive".

The power stations are a dual target, due to their role in energy supply but also because of the catastrophic consequences of breach of the facilities. They would dramatically increase the number of critical infrastructure targets that would need to be defended in the event of conflict.

Former Chief of the Australian Defence Force, Admiral Chris Barrie (Rrtd) says: "The proposed nuclear facilities add a high level of complexity to Australia's defense strategy, raising a fundamental strategic dilemma: where do limited national defence resources go? Do we prioritize the protection of cities and population centres and military bases, or do we divert vital resources to defending seven nuclear power stations scattered across Australia?"

Ms Durrant says: "Australia currently lacks a comprehensive, layered missile defence system capable of safeguarding both major urban centres and high-value, strategic infrastructure. The introduction of multiple nuclear facilities would necessitate a significant and costly expansion of Australia's defensive capabilities—something our current military posture is not equipped to handle."

In reports to the government and the community, ASLCG has shown that climate disruption now presents the greatest, and potentially existential, threat to society and human security in Australia and around the world. The Asia-Pacific, the highest risk region in the world, faces devastating climate impacts, and Australia as a hot and dry continent is particularly vulnerable. Delaying the path to emissions reduction in Australia will exacerbate these risks, making it crucial to fast-track decarbonisation.

Policymakers must ensure that Australia's energy policy does not inadvertently expose Australia to unacceptable climate and security risks in an increasingly volatile security landscape.

Media contact: Luke Taylor, 0449 641 160