

Nuclear waste

Paul Karp

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Inquiry backs plan to store world's nuclear waste in outback Australia

Draft findings of royal commission in South Australia back nuclear fuel storage and expanded uranium mining, but rule out nuclear energy industry



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The storage and disposal of used nuclear fuel from other countries is likely to deliver substantial economic benefits for [South Australia](#), a royal commission into the nuclear fuel cycle has found.

On Monday, the South Australian royal commission released its tentative findings, which backed nuclear fuel storage and left the door open to further uranium mining and processing but came down against the use of nuclear power for electricity generation.



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The findings said a nuclear storage and disposal facility would be commercially viable and South Australia could store nuclear waste as early as the late 2020s. It suggested the state set up a sovereign wealth fund “to accumulate and equitably share the profits from the storage and disposal of waste”.

The royal commission noted the main hazard from developing an industry storing other countries’ used fuel rods was emission of radiation into the natural environment, including that particles emitting radiation could be inhaled or ingested by humans and other organisms.

But it said Finland and Sweden had both developed safe facilities for long-term disposal of nuclear waste. Risks could be mitigated by storing waste in solid form in geologically stable areas, and several layers of packaging and containers to prevent waste contaminating groundwater.

South Australia was suitable because of its low levels of seismic activity, arid environment in many parts of the state, stable political structure and frameworks for securing long-term agreement with landowners and the community.

The report did not consider specific sites for nuclear waste dumps.

The draft findings were that nuclear waste storage and disposal could generate \$5bn a year for the first 30 years of operation and about \$2bn a year until waste receipts conclude. This would result in \$51bn profit over the life of the project, it said.

The report predicted nuclear storage would create approximately 1,500 full-time jobs during a construction period of about 25 years, peaking at 4,500, and leaving more than 600 jobs once operations begin.

The report also said expansion of uranium mining could be economically beneficial but “it is not the most significant opportunity”.

The royal commission said uranium processing could not be developed in the next decade as a standalone industry as the market was already oversupplied and uncertain, but fuel leasing, which links uranium processing with its eventual return for disposal, is more likely to be commercially attractive.

It said nuclear power would not be commercially viable in South Australia in the foreseeable future but suggested further planning as “nuclear power may be necessary, along with other low-carbon generation technologies” in the future.

The royal commission will now conduct five weeks of consultation, with responses due by 18 March. The commission’s final report will be delivered on 6 May.

The federal government is currently searching for a site for the long-term disposal of its low level and intermediate level nuclear waste.

Conservation Council SA chief executive Craig Wilkins welcomed findings that nuclear power, uranium conversion, enrichment and nuclear fuel reprocessing were not economically viable but opposed the proposal of nuclear storage.



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“If we pursue a nuclear waste dump path, we are saying the best we can do is accept the worst the world has got,” he said.

“The royal commission presents an optimistic view of potential profits from offering Australia as the world’s nuclear waste dump. It acknowledges that nuclear waste needs to be isolated from the environment for many hundreds of thousands of years yet there is no attempt to cost the management of waste over those timeframes,” Wilkins said.

Federal minister for resources and energy Josh Frydenberg said the government welcomed the release of the interim findings as an opportunity “to discuss new and expanded industries that could create jobs, growth and significant revenue for Australia”.

But he said expansion of Australia’s nuclear industry would require significant legislative and regulatory change.

Frydenberg said the federal government’s proposed national nuclear waste facility would only store low and intermediate level waste. “It cannot and will not be built to store radioactive waste generated overseas or high level waste,” he said.

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F*ck the jobs, f*ck the profit, f*ck the spin. It's dirty and dangerous well beyond any period of perceived economic benefit.

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itchyvet

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Inquiry backs plan to store nuclear waste in S.A. ????

Hmmm, who sat on this inquiry, who funded said enquiry, and who covers the cost of managing this facility when the import of waste is terminated ??????????????????

Wouldn't happen to be the Australian tax payer now by any chance would it ?????

South Australians take note, you are being sold a pig.

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