



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

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**Australian Nuclear Science  
and Technology Organisation**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 19 November 2009**

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Boyce, Sen Sue

**Source** Senate  
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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Senator BOYCE** (Queensland) (6.39 pm)—I think everyone in the Senate would appreciate what an extremely responsible and proactive organisation we have and how lucky we are to have ANSTO as the primary vehicle for the knowledge and development of nuclear expertise in Australia. In the ANSTO annual report, the chairman, Dr Ziggy Switkowski writes:

On a wider scale, nuclear technology is gaining broad interest and acceptance for its potential role in mitigating climate change. Many countries in the world are moving forward with plans for significant numbers of new nuclear power reactors, recognising that nuclear power is the only, currently available, technology truly capable of providing base-load power without significant contributions to climate change emissions.

This would seem to be something of a self-evident truth. But is the minister responsible, our esteemed Senator the Hon. Kim Carr, listening to what Dr Switkowski is saying? Is the Prime Minister listening? Is anybody at all in the government listening to this? I think—sadly for Australia and sadly for the debate around climate change and the solutions to this—the answer is no.

Dr Switkowski in his foreword to the report also notes that our regional neighbours China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, India and Pakistan already deploy nuclear power and that Indonesia and Vietnam are about to join that list. Does the Rudd government believe that all of these countries in our region are wrong, immoral short-sighted and reckless for embracing nuclear power? Dr Switkowski has also noted—and this comment has had some media coverage—that Australia is unique among the G20 in refusing to embrace the nuclear option. Out of the 20 nations, 15 rely on nuclear power and another four are building nuclear reactors as a means of addressing climate change.

The breathless hypocrisy of this government on the subject of nuclear power is just extraordinary. We have the world's largest uranium reserves, about 23 per cent or almost one quarter. In 2008 we exported 10,707 tonnes of uranium to be used for energy generation, and the bulk of those exports went to the G20 nations. Our Prime Minister on 12 November said Australia and India were looking to the day when 'India's ambitious nuclear program could include Australian uranium.' Last year we exported 3,689 tonnes of uranium to the

USA, 3,000 more tonnes to the EU, 2,500 to Japan. We also sent uranium to China, South Korea, Canada and South Africa. So the Labor government's official policy is that nuclear power for Australia is not on the agenda, because it is far too risky, far too dangerous, far too problematic, not to mention environmentally disastrous and immoral. However, it seems that none of these things apply in all those countries that we happily and profitably export our uranium to.

Dr Switkowski is on the public record saying that Australia could safely and affordably build 50 nuclear power stations by 2050, and therefore provide 90 per cent of Australia's base-load power. If that were done, our carbon emissions, now standing at 1.4 per cent of the world's total, would decline to less than one per cent. There is broad and universal public acceptance of the pragmatic, peaceful and safe use of nuclear energy developing not only across the world but in Australia. ANSTO is at the forefront of this as a proactive and responsible organisation. We could be an entirely self-sufficient country in the production of clean energy and have a robust export industry as well. The shame is that, despite universal acceptance, the government's blind political dogma, hypocrisy and lack of courage on this is holding back any solutions for Australia and our climate.