

Dutton's dangerous nuclear fantasy will cost workers, says ACTU

The ACTU condemns Peter Dutton's election promise of building nuclear power plants as 'dangerous' and 'costly' for Australian workers.

Today, the Coalition proposed seven nuclear power sites covering five states: Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia. Dutton claimed that the first sites would be operational between 2035 and 2037, significantly earlier than the 2040 timeframe the CSIRO and other experts believe is feasible, even with the assumption of no project delays.

According to the CSIRO, nuclear power is at least twice as expensive as renewable energy, while the Clean Energy Council estimates it to be six times as expensive.

Dutton's proposal lacks key details of serious concern to workers, such as the handling and disposal of nuclear waste and the transportation of radioactive materials through Australian communities. Nuclear waste lasts thousands of years and requires burial hundreds of metres below ground in concrete bunkers.

Australia has the most sun and wind per capita of any developed country and evidence shows renewables continue to be the single cheapest source of new power on the grid.

The ACTU warns that Dutton's proposal would derail Australia's path to cheaper and cleaner energy, including the hundreds of thousands of good new jobs to be created as part of the federal government's plan to transform Australia into a renewable energy superpower with the Future Made in Australia policy.

Today's proposal builds on Dutton's recent announcement opposing the government's internationally agreed emissions reduction targets, while failing to outline a 2030 emissions reduction target of his own before the election.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Peter Dutton's nuclear fantasy is costly for workers, expensive for families and dangerous for local communities.

"Working people in these communities need good, secure, safe jobs now – not in 20 years time with no plan or detail.

"All the experts agree that nuclear power is slow, expensive, and dangerous. This will mean higher power prices, fewer clean energy jobs, and greater risks for workers' health and safety.

"Dutton wants to put workers' safety and livelihoods at risk, all so he can appease climate change deniers in the Coalition who oppose clean energy.

"From opposing workers' rights to promoting his nuclear fantasy, Peter Dutton is the Mr Burns of Australian politics. He is simply out of touch with the everyday struggles of working Australians.

"Australia has so much potential to become a clean energy superpower and create thousands of jobs with the federal government's Future Made in Australia plan. Instead, we have an Opposition Leader who is obsessed with playing politics with the lives of workers and taking Australia backwards."

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Media Contact: Cameron Warasta 0447 159 467