

Defence Procurement - Submarines

Australian Senate 3 May 2016 Hansard

Senator DAY (South Australia): My question is to the Minister for Defence, Senator Payne.

I commend the government for delivering on its pre-election commitment to build 12 new submarines in Adelaide and I congratulate the successful bidder, DCNS.

Minister, I note that the French were the only bidder to have nuclear powered submarines.

I also remind the minister of my question to her predecessor, Senator Johnston, in this place in December 2014. In his answer to my question, the minister congratulated me for commencing the nuclear submarine debate. I note that The Financial Review observed yesterday that some of our new submarines could in fact be nuclear powered by the time they enter service.

Minister, could some of the 12 Future Submarines be nuclear powered?

Minister Marise Payne: Senator Day, I thank you very much for the question. The answer is no, that is not in the government's contemplation.

Senator DAY: Mr President, I ask a supplementary question.

Minister, I note that the South Australian Royal commission into the nuclear fuel cycle has delivered interim findings and will release its final findings this Friday.

Given that there might be a potential nuclear-powered component for Future Submarines will the government commit to investigate and publish a cost-benefit analysis of the French nuclear industry helping to expand South Australian and national nuclear capabilities?

Minister: I reiterate that nuclear propulsion was not in contemplation.

Senator DAY: Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question.

Given that the French have just six submarines, as do the Germans—and the Japanese have 17—is the Minister confident that, by the end of the Future Submarines build, Australia will have the capacity to build its own submarines without relying on an international partner or, indeed, selling its capacity to other nations?

Minister: I emphasise sovereign capability through the Australian build in Adelaide, training, jobs, and long-term sustainment.