

MATS Plan Institute

Maritime Adelaide Transport System

Submission to the AUKUS Public Inquiry

July, 2026

This submission focuses on three of the five key objectives of the Inquiry, namely:

- *The implications of Australia acquiring nuclear-powered submarines.*
- *The economic, technological, and employment effects of AUKUS-related initiatives.*
- *The environmental, health, and safety consequences of nuclear technology and waste management.*

Australia-friendly countries in our circle of influence – India, Japan, and South Korea rely on nuclear reactors to generate electricity.

India currently has 25 operable nuclear reactors, Japan has 15 and South Korea has 8.

Of the 11 ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nation) states, six – Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines are looking to develop nuclear power in the near future.

All of the above have – or will have – spent nuclear fuel.

Spent fuel storage is, currently, a particular challenge for Japan and South Korea.

As Australia engages more with our Asian neighbours regarding regional security, Australia brings a unique perspective and relationship devoid of some of the centuries-old enmities that have existed between some of the above countries.

In this context, Australia is uniquely positioned to be a type of ‘Switzerland of the South’: a reliable, impartial partner in regional security.

Australia would be in a good position to lobby for the establishment of an Asia–Pacific office of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency). We could host conferences and bring the world’s best nuclear minds here.

Australia could bring together expertise on the ways in which other nations are storing their spent nuclear fuel. We could, as the [2015 South Australian Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission](#) heard, store that fuel in South Australia – and not within the borders of nations with fractious relations and/or unstable geology.

If some of the above countries were to store their spent fuel here, they would clearly have a strong interest in our security.

As well as the multi-billion-dollar economic benefits of spent fuel storage, with the latest technology we may, in time, be able to extract more recycled power from spent fuel in the future.

The more we engage with the nuclear question, the more positive the opportunities arise.

AUKUS could be that catalyst.

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