



MEDIA RELEASE

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Nuclear would funnel up to 200 Gigalitres away from Australian farms annually

Peter Dutton's nuclear plan would spark an Australian water crisis, potentially sucking a mammoth 200 gigalitres away from farmers in dry years through water buybacks and acquisitions, according to a new report by one of the nation's leading subject matter experts.

The Coalition bitterly opposes the current Labor Government buyback of 43 gigalitres of water allocation a year, less than a quarter of what its own nuclear plan would require.

"The nuclear idea is toxic with voters," said Liberals Against Nuclear spokesman Andrew Gregson, a former NSW Irrigators' Council chief executive. "It will require enormous water buybacks from farmers – which the Coalition has fought bitterly against for 15 years."

The report, [Australian nuclear energy proposals. water availability and acquisition options](#) was commissioned by Liberals Against Nuclear and authored by former Land & Water Australia chief executive and ANU visiting fellow, [Professor Andrew Campbell](#). It reveals the scale of water acquisitions required to run the Coalition's proposed nuclear reactors by asking how much water would need to be acquired through buybacks or compulsory acquisitions to run them at the seven proposed sites.

Relying on the Coalition's own modelling, the report assumes 13.8 gigawatts of nuclear capacity would replace the existing 8 gigawatts of coal-fired capacity. It estimates water consumption based on newly-commissioned nuclear reactors at Georgia USA, the same 'off the shelf' Westinghouse AP-1000 units proposed by The Coalition.

The report found:

- Annual high-security water allocation for a mammoth 200 gigalitres would potentially have to be acquired from farmers and other water users, such as coal mines and urban water supplies, to cool the nuclear reactors
- There is no guarantee farmers would give up this much water for sale. Compulsory acquisitions would likely be required
- Up to 39 gigalitres of annual allocation would need to be acquired each year in the Hunter, up to 25 GL around Mt Piper/Lithgow, up to 125GL in the Latrobe Valley (where the typical annual allocation to the local Macalister Irrigation District is just 32GL), 5GL in Callide and 7.5GL in Collie, WA
- The report concludes that 50% of the proposed nuclear generation capacity is already infeasible due to lack of water, and a further 40% would need to be curtailed in dry seasons due to lack of water to cool the reactor, or the water becoming too warm
- In short, at 5 of the 7 sites, representing 90% of the proposed generating capacity, nuclear power generation would be an unreliable source of electricity

LIBERALS AGAINST NUCLEAR

- Most nuclear reactors overseas are near the ocean, large lakes or large rivers – in cold and wet places – due to the enormous amount of high-security water required. Six of Coalition’s seven proposed sites are inland.

"The Nationals have spent 15 years educating rural communities on how much water buybacks hurt them and fighting tooth and nail to protect our agricultural water," Gregson said. "Now, there is a proposal to take water from the very farmers who grow our food.

"Making matters worse, this precious water will be used to create government-owned electricity companies to compete against private businesses. Forcing farmers to compete with the government when they buy water assaults every value that Liberal voters hold dear.

"We recently saw polling which showed support for nuclear in the political death zone in the proposed host sites. Support was 22% in Central West NSW, 27% in Gladstone, 24% in the rest of Central Queensland, 24% in south-west WA, just 32% in the Hunter and 31% in Gippsland. This policy is electoral poison.

"Nuclear must be dumped. It is already causing an electoral nightmare and in the long run, it is political and economic suicide. It will completely distort our economy, crowding out the private sector. It is the wrong thing to do and means destroying the livelihood of some of our most loyal supporters.

"This water grab threatens to sever the trust between the Coalition and agricultural communities permanently. We've spent decades building our reputation as champions of farmers' rights - particularly water access. Why would we throw away that political capital for nuclear plants that most Australians don't want?

"Mr Dutton must drop this toxic nuclear policy and focus on our winning strengths of small government, managing the economy and real liberal values. We can still win this election, but not with this nuclear proposal, which is diametrically at odds with our values."

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Relevant quotes on water buybacks:

[Nationals Deputy Leader Perin Davey](#): "Farmers and their communities are crying out against the buybacks which they see are undermining their regional economic viability."

[David Littleproud](#) on Labor water buybacks:

"If that much water is purchased from farmers, less food is produced, so every Australian will pay more at the check-out," Mr Littleproud said.