

Speech

Australia's naval nuclear propulsion: AUKUS update to IAEA Board of Governors

The United Kingdom, Australia and the United States (AUKUS) updated the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors on naval nuclear propulsion.

From: [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office](#)
[\(/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office\)](#) and
Australian government representative
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Australia delivered this statement on behalf of AUKUS partners under agenda item 12: any other business:

Thank you, Chair. I have the honour of speaking on behalf of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States to provide – as promised – an update to the Board of Governors on Australia’s naval nuclear propulsion program.

Chair, bilateral technical consultations between Australia and the IAEA on a safeguards and verification approach for Australia’s naval nuclear propulsion program are ongoing.

These consultations include negotiations relating to the development of a robust Article 14 arrangement under Australia’s Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) that enables the IAEA to meet its technical objectives.

Since our last update to the November Board, a further round of formal consultations between Australia and the Agency took place in December 2023. Topics discussed during these consultations included:

- legal and technical aspects of an Article 14 arrangement for Australia, including the arrangement’s form and structure
- ways to facilitate possible verification and monitoring activities, including voluntary transparency measures, in relation to Australia’s naval nuclear propulsion program, and *discussion of Safeguards by Design best practice

As has been confirmed by the Director General, Australia's engagement with the IAEA on naval nuclear propulsion is in accordance with the Agency's statutory mandate and authority to hold confidential discussions with member states on safeguards implementation issues.

We reiterate our commitment to ensuring that the non-proliferation approach for Australia's naval nuclear propulsion program meets the highest non-proliferation standard. Australia's Article 14 arrangement will not remove nuclear material from IAEA oversight: the Agency will continue to fulfil its technical objectives at all stages of Australia's nuclear-powered submarine program – verifying no diversion of nuclear material; no misuse of nuclear facilities; and no undeclared nuclear material or activities in Australia.

The Director General has committed to continue to report to the Board and member states on developments in the consultations between the IAEA and Australia regarding Australia's naval nuclear propulsion program as the need arises, and we fully support his prerogative to do so. He has also committed to transmitting Australia's Article 14 arrangement, once developed, to the Board for appropriate action. Again, as we have stated previously, we fully support this approach.

Chair, the AUKUS partners have already addressed during the current Board meeting some of the more egregious misinformation which has been presented on this topic, and I do not intend to go over that again.

Instead, consistent with AUKUS partners' abiding commitment to transparency, I wish to provide an update on developments relating to Australia's naval nuclear propulsion program, which have occurred since we last met.

High level engagements between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States continue. In December 2023, our defence ministers met to discuss a number of initiatives under AUKUS, including increased education and training opportunities to develop the workforce needed to support Australia's future nuclear-powered submarine capability. The Ministers also reaffirmed their shared commitment to upholding the highest standard for nuclear non-proliferation and welcomed the regular, open, and transparent engagement with the IAEA to date.

In December 2023, the United States Congress passed the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act which, amongst other important national defence initiatives, includes substantial enabling provisions for AUKUS. In addition to authorising the future transfer of three conventionally-armed Virginia class submarines to Australia, the Act also contains provisions to enhance skills development across the partners' workforces and to lift the capacity of our respective industrial bases.

Chair, we welcome this opportunity to update the Board. We will continue to provide updates on developments relating to Australia's naval nuclear propulsion program, and to address genuine questions from interested delegations regarding our non-proliferation approach through this and other fora, as appropriate. Thank you, Chair.

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