

Greens see red over WWF, yellow cake

What a nice thought ... ≥ that they are going to lose

The Age (Australia)
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Key green groups have turned on the Australian head of WWF over his reported softened stance on the mining and export of uranium.

WWF–Australia chief executive Greg Bourne, a former head of energy company BP Australasia, was quoted as saying Australia was destined – under all governments – to be mining uranium and exporting it to a growing world market.

At issue was the safety aspect of uranium usage, he said.

"The key issues are, if we're going to be a nation exporting uranium, we have to know absolutely it's only being used for peaceful purposes and waste products are being stored safely," Mr Bourne told News Ltd.

His comments are at odds with his organisation's international body.

WWF International states that its policy of massive and speedy transfer of energy usage to renewable sources implies the use of uranium must eventually be reduced to zero, with a phase-out of nuclear power.

Mr Bourne subsequently stated that WWF–Australia, formerly the World Wildlife Fund, had never supported nuclear energy as a climate change solution and there was no need for nuclear power in Australia.

He did not retract his reported comments on mining and export.

The comments follow Australia's signing last month of a deal with China which paves the way to massive exports there.

It is also significant for Labor whose members have conflicting views about nuclear energy in the lead-up to its national conference.

Greenpeace Australia's chief executive **paid activist** Steve Shallhorn avoided direct comment on Mr Bourne's statement, pointing out instead that the government was out of step with mainstream scientific and environmental opinion on climate change and non-greenhouse energy.

But he noted that "WWF and Greenpeace both have international policies that nuclear power is no solution to climate change and both groups oppose an expansion of nuclear power in this or any country".

The Wilderness Society Australia director Alec Marr said if WWF did change its uranium policy, it would have betrayed the people who support it.

"Abandoning a policy and a principled position on nuclear mining simply because the government intends to proceed is the equivalent of The Wilderness Society giving up on its opposition to a dam on Tasmania's Franklin River because the government wanted to destroy the river," he said.

"The Australian environment movement is opposed to further uranium mining and if WWF-Australia does change its stance then it will have betrayed the people who support it."

Opposition Leader Kim Beazley said Mr Bourne's statements were virtually the same thing he had been saying for months.

"It's not a question of who digs up uranium – it's a question of the terms and conditions on which we sell it," Mr Beazley said.

"That's the new territory now, of ensuring that the public safety and global safety is preserved."

Energy Minister Ian Macfarlane said nuclear energy would not be a commercial option in Australia for some years, but he remained a strong advocate of greater uranium exports.

"We've welcomed three notable backflips on the expansion of uranium mining in recent weeks – Kim Beazley, (Queensland Premier) Peter Beattie and now the WWF," he said.

"There's something in the air and I think it might actually be commonsense."