

# Nuclear Energy for Australia?

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The Australian energy sector is dominated by coal, oil and gas. In 2017–2018 these resources provided for 94 per cent of Australia’s energy and 83 per cent of Australia’s electricity production. Australia has the world’s largest known reserves of uranium, and yet it is the only country in the G20 that does not use nuclear energy within its energy mix. The construction of nuclear power plants and associated facilities is banned under federal legislation, as well as under the legislation of certain Australian states.

In this seminar, Helen Cook will provide an overview of Australia’s historical policy position toward nuclear energy and review the legislative ban on nuclear energy generation. She will consider previous inquiries into the possibility of the introduction of nuclear energy into Australia’s generation mix, such as the 2006 review culminating in the Switkowski Report and the South Australian Royal Commission, which reported its findings to the South Australian Government in 2016.

Helen will discuss more recent developments, such as the current parliamentary inquiries at the Federal level and in the states of New South Wales and Victoria into nuclear energy generation. She will discuss why these inquiries appear to be focussed on small modular reactors. While the outcomes of these inquiries are difficult to predict, Helen will identify the policy, legal and regulatory steps that will need to be taken and the challenges to be overcome should Australia, at some point in the future, decide to introduce nuclear energy into its energy mix.



**Helen Cook**  
Principal,  
GNE Advisory

Helen Cook is an Australian qualified nuclear energy lawyer and the Principal of GNE Advisory, a law practice dedicated to all aspects of the civil nuclear sector. She is the author of the comprehensive

legal text book, *The Law of Nuclear Energy* published by Sweet & Maxwell, (Second Edition, March 2018) and the former chairperson of the Law Working Group of the World Nuclear Association.

Helen has expertise advising on both the structuring and establishment of the legal and regulatory infrastructure for civilian nuclear power programmes, as well as the strategic development and negotiation of commercial arrangements for new nuclear power plants, including procurement, construction and financing. She has advised on nuclear projects and transactions in the United Kingdom, the United States, Egypt, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, Argentina, India, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

Helen is recognised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as a nuclear law expert and was featured in the 2017 issue of the IAEA Bulletin “showcasing the achievements and perspectives of eight exceptional women in the nuclear field”.

## About the Centre for International Law

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