



Australian Government
Defence

FACTSHEET A: Introduction to the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulations – public consultation



July 2025



What is AUKUS?

AUKUS is a trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States that focuses on promoting a secure and stable Indo-Pacific region.

Developing the ability to build, sustain and operate conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines is one of the most significant industrial undertakings in Australia's history.

The opportunities presented by AUKUS are immense, generating more than 20,000 direct jobs across Australia over the next 30 years.

The AUKUS nuclear-powered submarine pathway will deliver long-term strategic benefits for Australia, the United Kingdom and United States.

Delivering Australia's sovereign nuclear-powered submarine capability while assuring the safety of the community and environment is the Australian Government's top priority.

What is this consultation?

Defence has released the draft Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulations for public consultation which are the regulations that focus on licensing facilities and materials for regulated activities related to naval nuclear propulsion (NNP).

Defence is inviting key stakeholders and the Australian public to share their views.

This is an opportunity for groups and individuals to provide feedback on the specific details of the draft Regulations for the future Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator.

Parties that may wish to be involved in this consultation include state governments, defence industry, unions, First Nations groups and local communities.

The consultation period provides an opportunity for the community to share views and remain informed on the development of the Regulations for Australia's conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine enterprise.

The public consultation period will run from **2 – 30 July 2025**.

Information about how to view the Regulations and submit feedback are available on the Defence website:

www.defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/australian-naval-nuclear-power-safety-regulations



What is a statutory regulator?

A statutory regulator is a government-established body that oversees and enforces regulations within a specific body or sector.

It must assure the Parliament that the body is acting in accordance with its roles, responsibilities and powers.




What is the future Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator?

In November 2024, the passing of the *Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Act 2024* (ANNPS Act) enabled the establishment of a new statutory regulator.

The role of the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator (the Regulator) is to implement the ANNPS Act and provide assurance that along the lifecycle of AUKUS, nuclear safety and radiological protection will be maintained.

The Regulator will issue licences, monitor conditions and enforce compliance concerning activities associated with Australia's NNP.

There will be three kinds of regulated activities: facility, material and submarine.

		
Facility	Material	Submarine
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Preparing a site for a NNP facility▪ Constructing a NNP facility▪ Possessing or controlling a NNP facility▪ Decommissioning a NNP facility▪ Disposing of a NNP facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Possessing or controlling NNP material or equipment▪ Using NNP material in a Designated Zone or an Australian nuclear-powered submarine▪ Using or operating NNP equipment or plant in a Designated Zone or Australian nuclear-powered submarine▪ Maintaining, storing or disposing of NNP material, equipment or plant in a Designated Zone or Australian nuclear-powered submarine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Constructing a nuclear-powered submarine▪ Possessing or controlling an Australian nuclear-powered submarine▪ Operating an Australian nuclear-powered submarine▪ Decommissioning an Australian nuclear-powered submarine▪ Disposing of an Australian nuclear-powered submarine

What is out of the future Regulator’s scope?

Australia will not manage, store or dispose of spent nuclear fuel or reactors from UK or US submarines.

The Regulator will not regulate sovereign US and UK nuclear-powered submarines or other visiting foreign nuclear-powered vessels. The Regulator will regulate the nuclear safety aspects of Australian infrastructure and facilities that will support UK and US submarines in a Designated Zone.

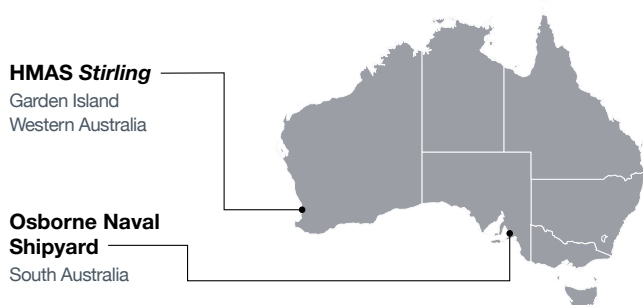
Facilities to manage and dispose of high-level radioactive waste (spent nuclear fuel) generated from decommissioning Australia's future nuclear-powered submarines will not be required until after the first Australian submarine is decommissioned in the 2050s.

Where will these activities be regulated?

The Regulator will oversee an activity if it occurs:

- 1) in a Designated Zone, or
- 2) on board an Australian submarine.

There are two designated zones; the Stirling Designated Zone at HMAS *Stirling* at Garden Island, Western Australia, and the Osborne Designated Zone at Osborne Naval Shipyard, South Australia.



These Designated Zones will represent the future Regulator's boundaries and clearly define its responsibilities and jurisdiction with those of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) and state and territory radiation safety regulators.

The Designated Zones have been identified based on their suitability for the development and sustainment of Australian nuclear-powered submarines and related activities.

The Regulator's responsibility is to provide assurance to the Australian community that the NNP facilities and material activities conducted within the Designated Zones maintain the safety and health of the public and the surrounding environment.

Before a Designated Zone can be prescribed, the ANNPS Act requires that public consultation occurs on the proposed new area.

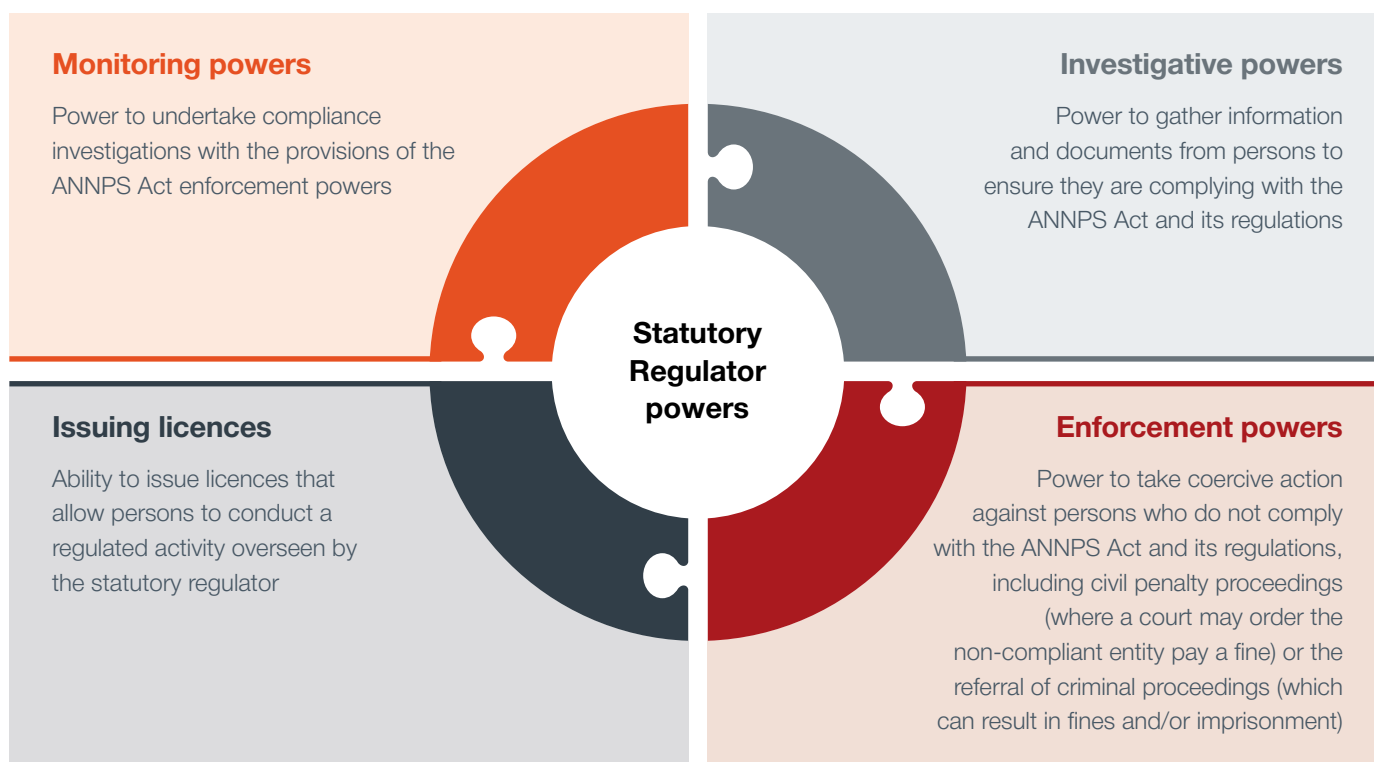
The public will be notified of the proposed boundary of any new Designated Zone with interested parties invited to make a submission regarding the area.

The Stirling and Osborne Designated Zones were specified in the ANNPS Act. The ANNPS Regulations will show the geographic extent of those zones.

More information about these Zones can be found in Factsheet B.

How will the Regulator work?

The Regulator will issue licences, monitor and enforce regulated activities associated with Australia's NNP, outlined in the diagram below.



Drafting of the Regulations supports the AUKUS pathway

Future proposed regulations will address submarine activities, to support the acquisition and operation of Virginia-class submarines and the construction of SSN-AUKUS and to meet the AUKUS Pathway announced by the Government in March 2023.

Draft Regulations support national uniformity and international alignment

The Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulations (the Regulations) are under development and focus on licensing facilities and materials for regulated activities related to naval nuclear power.

The draft Regulations have been informed by the highest international standards for nuclear safety from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United States and United Kingdom peer regulators, and are designed to operate within the Australian context.

Australia will continue to meet all of its international obligations, including under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and Treaty of Rarotonga.

Did you know?

Australia has decades of experience in safely managing radioactive waste. For more information about how Australia currently manages and stores radioactive waste go to the Australian Radioactive Waste Agency (ARWA) or the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) website.

SEARCH

Australian Radioactive Waste Agency
Managing Radioactive Waste | ANSTO



The regulator will build on existing experience

Australia has more than 70 years of experience in nuclear operations and nuclear regulation. Australia is recognised as a world leader in the safe management and stewardship of civilian nuclear facilities and materials.

We are building upon Australia's good track record in nuclear safety regulation.

Australia has nuclear safety regulatory experience overseeing complex civilian facilities spanning more than 70 years and includes a Commonwealth regulator, the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), and eight state and territory radiation safety regulators.

The draft Regulations build upon our national nuclear regulatory expertise.

We are leveraging the deep experience and impeccable safety record of our AUKUS partners in the US and UK to safely regulate in a military context.

Regulating safety aspects of nuclear-powered submarines requires a system that is calibrated to addressing the unique contexts associated with this sensitive military capability.

Defence has consulted and will continue to access the knowledge and experience of our AUKUS partner peer-regulators, the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (UK) and Naval Reactors (US), and the outstanding safety records they have upheld for more than 70 years of safe operation.

Australia has decades of experience in safely managing and storing radioactive wastes.

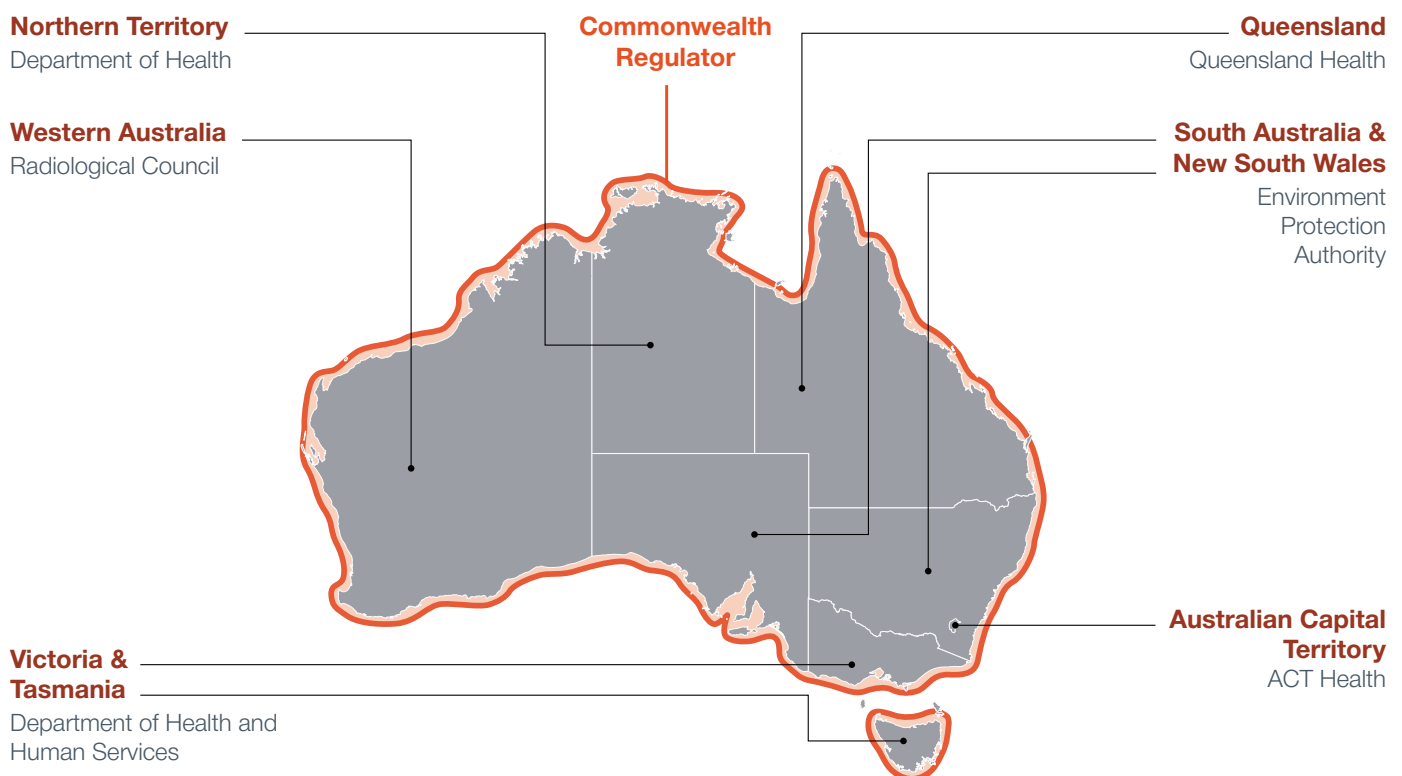
The majority of Australia's radioactive waste is stored at the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) in Sydney.

Australia will continue to learn from the US and UK's more than 70-year history of regulating and managing nuclear propulsion technology, including regulation of radioactive waste, in order to develop a Regulator and Regulations that are fit for purpose in the Australian context.

How does the Regulator fit into Australia's regulatory landscape?

The nuclear safety regulation landscape in Australia currently consists of one Commonwealth regulator, ARPANSA and eight state and territory regulators.

One of the functions of ARPANSA is to promote uniformity of radiation protection and nuclear safety policy and practices across all jurisdictions.

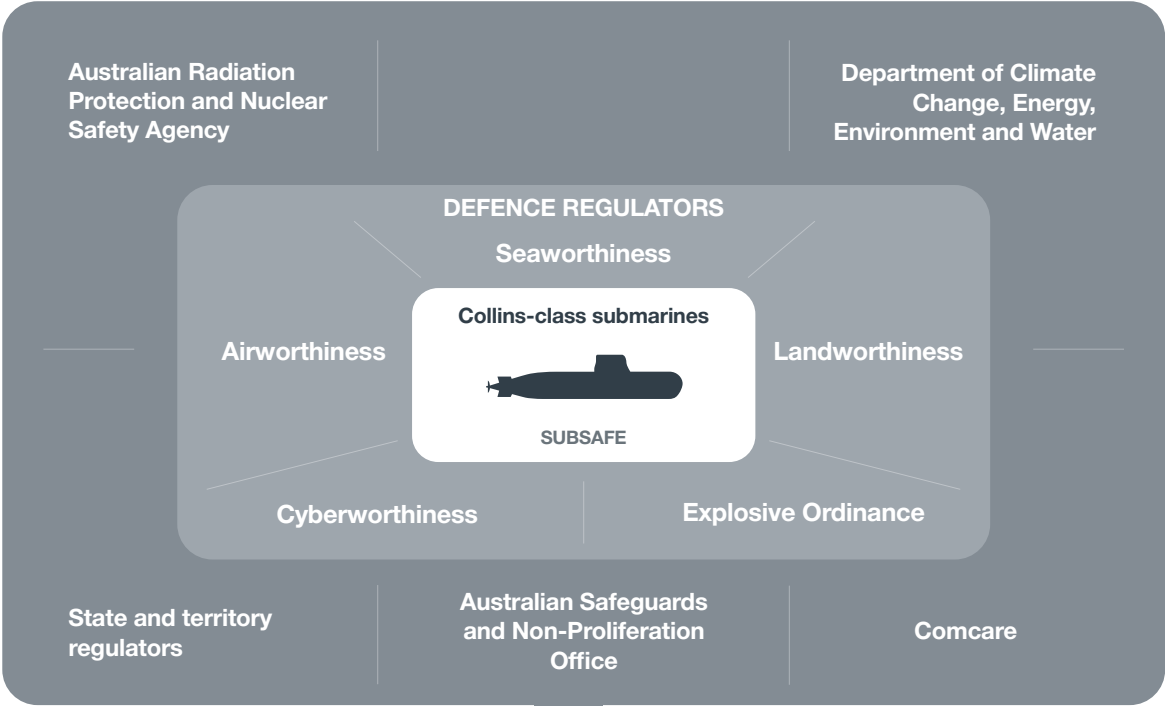


The future regulatory landscape for Australian nuclear-powered submarines

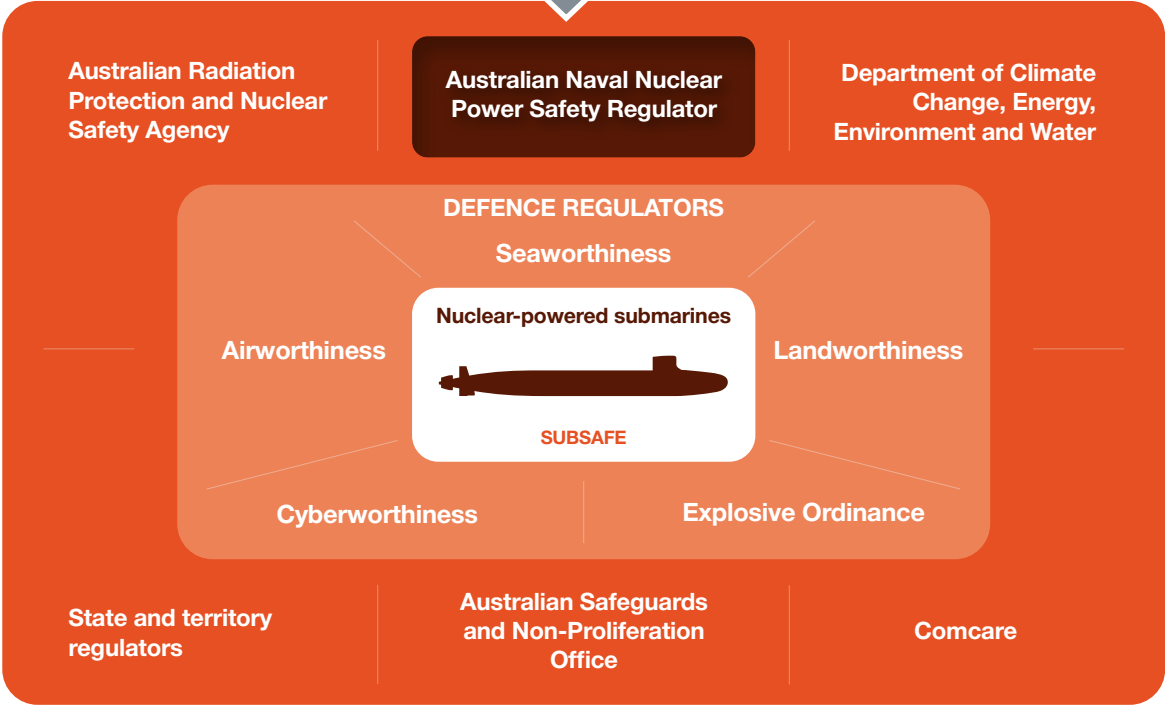
The new Regulator will operate within a system of regulation that includes other Commonwealth regulators; the Defence Seaworthiness Regulator; the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the

Environment and Water (DCCEEW); Comcare and appropriate state and territory government regulators. The current and future regulatory landscapes for Australian submarines are outlined in the graphic below.

Current REGULATOR LANDSCAPE



Future REGULATOR LANDSCAPE



The pathway to the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator

The plans and arrangements in place for the establishment of the new Regulator support the time frames of the AUKUS Pathway.

March 2023	Government announcement of the AUKUS Pathway for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines.
6 May 2023	Government announcement of statutory independent regulator.
16 November 2023	The Government introduced the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Bill 2023 to Parliament that would enable the establishment of the Regulator.
13 May 2024	Report of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee inquiry on the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Bill 2023.
12 September 2024	The Government's response to the recommendations of the Report is tabled.
October 2024	The <i>Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Act 2024</i> and the <i>Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety (Transitional Provisions) Act 2024</i> passed both Houses of Parliament.
2 – 30 July 2025	Public consultation on draft Regulations.
By 1 November 2025	The Act commences and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator is established.



Defence acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, water and sky and pay respect to elders both past and present. Defence would also like to pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war.