



Why Are Nuclear Powered Submarines Important?

The Case for Social Acceptance of (aka A Social Licence for) Deterrence.

It is critically important that the Australian people understand how vital the protection of our maritime supply lines and resources is to our Australian way of life and how much that protection, will - in the future - rely on nuclear powered submarines. Sustainment of our way of life needs the understanding and support of all Australians.

Australia is an island trading nation connected to a global trading system by seabed cables and maritime commerce, defending our national interests means defending the international system that enables our economic prosperity, security, and well-being. This has been the status quo for Australia for nearly 80 years. We took for granted our shipping lines, our intact underwater sea cables and sub-surface pipelines and also adherence to a rules-based global order underpinned by international law.

But the status quo no longer applies. Australia's region, the Indo-Pacific, faces increasing competition that operates on multiple levels: economic, military and diplomatic. The Indo-Pacific is now home to the largest military buildup anywhere in the world in the last 70 years, and the development of these capabilities coincides with behaviors that do not reflect the rules-based global order. Closing modern sea lanes and threatening undersea infrastructure would have a critical impact on Australia's economy and security – We must have the capability to prevent this from occurring.

The major threat to our maritime stability and maritime supply lines is the threat from hostile submarines. The best counter to a hostile submarine is a stealthy, well-armed and efficiently crewed Australian nuclear powered submarine. Deployment of such submarines to the close vicinity of hostile operational bases, at the point of their initial departure, offers the strongest deterrent to potential adversaries. In the lead-up to deteriorating strategic circumstances, issues of important surveillance and intelligence collection can be undertaken. Whilst conventional submarines have limited capability in this role. Their requirement to re-charge their batteries limits their effectiveness and stealth: together with their speed and endurance to cover the significant distances involved.

The deployment of allied airborne and surface anti-submarine platforms in the vicinity of distant hostile operational bases (from which adversarial submarines deploy) is ineffective unless they control the air and surface sea space. The stealth of allied and Australian nuclear-powered submarines will be highly effective in such hostile areas.

To protect Australia's sea lines of supply, Australia must expand investment in nuclear powered submarine capabilities now. These platforms will deter, through denial, any attempt to project force against Australia; they will protect Australia's economic connection to our region and the world and contribute with our partners to the collective security of the Indo-Pacific and contribute to the maintenance of a global rules-based order.

From Australia's force structure perspective, an essential element of deterrence is effective submarine capability. If our sea lanes are closed and our undersea infrastructure threatened there would be a critical impact on Australia's economy and security - also that of our partners in the Indo-Pacific.

That is why Australia has prioritized the SSNs in its Navy and defence. Australia needs to establish, maintain and sustain a submarine capability advantage in that domain. The undersea environment is becoming increasingly contested and more challenging for us to secure our interests. As technology evolves, the ability of Australia's current diesel electric submarines, to operate in the environments that we need them to, will gradually diminish. Only conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs) will meet Australia's defence requirements in the decades ahead.



Nuclear-powered submarines are highly effective platforms of deterrence. Deterrence is a national strategic necessity. It ensures the current and future security of the country but requires advanced planning and long-term programming. It is not just about the current generation – it is an urgency for our children, grandchildren and ongoing generations of Australians.