

## **Stand Up Nuclear Event “*Nuclear Communities talking to Communities*”**

Facebook Event 10:15 am AEST Monday 18 October 2021

Summary by John Patterson, ANA

The “Stand Up for Nuclear Communities talking to Communities” panel provided a wide-ranging and generally positive international discussion on the introduction of nuclear power. The panel was chaired by engineer and entrepreneur James Fleay who said that with reducing emissions at the forefront of the global agenda, the question of what will become of our coal communities, in the future is a major political concern.

Panel members were introduced by James Fleay who has expertise and experience in both renewables and nuclear power. Co-chair was Helen Cook, a legal expert and member of the A N A executive committee, who provided a contact point and arbiter for the international female panel members. Other Australians on the panel included Joe Italiano, a coal worker from Collie W A, and Shane and Di Sneddon, a coal-mining family from the upper Hunter Valley, as well as Graeme Middlemiss from the Latrobe coalfield, all able to speak first-hand from their locations. Internationally, we had Randall Luthi from Wyoming, USA where Bill Gates is commissioning his Terrapower demonstration 350 – 500 MWatt small modular nuclear reactor to replace an existing coal-fired station, that is closing. We also had Shiela Whystack, founder of Mums for Nuclear, from Bruce Nuclear Ontario Canada, which has a 60 year history of supplying over 30% of Ontario’s electricity, and Heather Hoff an engineer and nuclear power station operator from California and founder of Mothers for Nuclear.

Wyoming is a western coal-mining state with six coal-fired plants. It is a major source of electricity, not only for Wyoming but for other north western states and northern California. There, Randall Luthi said that the renewables debate was raging strongly in the US, except that during the recent winter storms, they stopped hearing about the cheapness of renewables and they heard much more about the reliability of coal and nuclear. There is considerable interest in the proposed Terrapower SMR expected on line about 2028. The backing by Bill Gates has made it more acceptable to the Wyoming coal community. The cost of nuclear is an issue in the US because the large nuclear plant in Georgia went over budget and construction time, mainly because of costly mistakes and delays due to lack of experience. First of a kind is likely to face a similar problem wherever it is built.

Canada and the US have a complicated pricing mechanism which favours renewable power and works against nuclear. Shiela Whystack said that Ontario’s Bruce Nuclear has 1500 well paid technical employees as well as employing many contractors. They maintain a good image in the community due to their outgoing public relations approach and the many benefits they provide.

Heather in California suggested that advertising for zero carbon don’t necessarily mean that the electricity is produced with zero emissions, but that non-zero emissions are offset by carbon credits. She said that the next step for the pro-nuclear supporters should be to ensure that all electricity is truly produced with zero emissions, with no offsets. Heather and Shiela both agreed on the importance of nuclear’s ability to produce heat as a means of energy storage and value to industry. On public acceptance, Shiela said that she found it interesting that the closer people were to the nuclear power stations, the more accepting they were, compared the public’s cool attitude to a proposed deep geological repository in the same area, and which was unfamiliar to them.

Graeme Middlemiss suggested Victoria is moving to replace brown coal generation in the LaTrobe Valley by renewables supplemented by batteries and pumped hydro. People there do not talk much about nuclear. Brown coal is now priced out of the market by renewables, except early morning and evening. Shane in the Hunter region suggested that people realised that the Liddell Power Station was going to be shut down soon and they had a more open mind towards replacing it with a nuclear plant, than they otherwise would. They wanted the continuing employment the nuclear plant would provide.

In his final summing up, James Fleay thanked the participants and said that people advocating for nuclear power in Australia had their work cut out for them. It would not happen easily.

John Patterson, ANA

19 October 2021