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No nukes in Qld: Crisafulli rejects Dutton's plan

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Queensland Liberal National Party leader David Crisafulli has rebuffed federal leader Peter Dutton's push [<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/australia-must-join-nuclear-renaissance-dutton-20230706-p5dmap>] to repurpose the state's retiring coal-fired power stations for nuclear power, saying it will never get off the ground without bipartisan support.

As Mr Dutton attempts to put nuclear power back on the agenda as a way to help Australia to reach net zero by 2050 [<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/price-pain-on-australia-s-bumpy-road-to-net-zero-20221018-p5bqu2>], Labor has ridiculed the idea as too expensive, despite the price of small modular reactors coming down in recent years [<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/nuclear-is-a-debate-australia-needs-to-have-advocate-20230707-p5dmgf>].

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Queensland Liberal National Party leader David Crisafulli does not back nuclear power. **Jamila Toderas**

Mr Crisafulli, who could become premier at Queensland's state election

[<https://www.afr.com/politics/david-who-crisafulli-hungry-for-queensland-s-top-job-20230707-p5dmh8>] next year, according to the latest opinion polls, said there was no point discussing nuclear power until it was endorsed by both major parties.

"Until both sides of federal parliament agree that is the course of action, it is not going to happen," Mr Crisafulli told *The Australian Financial Review*.

"I'm not spending any energy on it – pardon the pun – because no one will invest in it unless both sides agree to it. It's a reality."

When asked what he would do if he and Mr Dutton won their respective elections and it became federal government policy, Mr Crisafulli said investors would still steer clear of nuclear power until Labor was behind it.

Federal Labor is vehemently opposed to nuclear power

[<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/labor-hiding-behind-cost-argument-on-nuclear-power-20230124-p5cf0x>], despite some former senior figures in the party privately conceding it should at least be considered by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Energy and Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen as a reliable, low-emissions energy source.

Smaller economies investing

Mr Dutton used a speech to the Institute of Public Affairs on Friday to call for Australia to become part of a “nuclear renaissance”

[<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/australia-must-join-nuclear-renaissance-dutton-20230706-p5dmap>], building small modular nuclear reactors on the site of existing coal-fired power stations and using transmission networks already in place.

“If nuclear power is so prohibitively expensive, why are more than 50 countries investing in it, including those with smaller economies than Australia?” Mr Dutton asked.

The CSIRO and the Australian Energy Market Operator in their draft Gencost report from December admitted they did not estimate the cost of small nuclear reactors because there was “no prospect of a plant being deployed in Australia before 2030”.

But it estimated the costs per megawatt hour for nuclear power from 2030 (for the levelised cost of electricity) were about \$140 per megawatt hour to \$310 per megawatt hour. This compares with \$150 per megawatt hour to \$220 per megawatt hour for black coal and \$140 per megawatt hour to \$240 per megawatt hour for large-scale gas.

Nuclear power becomes more viable closer to 2050, at \$140 per megawatt hour to \$180 per megawatt hour, according to the Gencost report.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is attempting to shut its fleet of coal-fired power stations by 2035 [<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/qld-to-cut-off-coal-power-by-2035-20220928-p5bljs>], to be replaced by two taxpayer-funded pumped hydro projects.



Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk's support is falling, according to a new AFR/Freshwater Strategy poll. **Tertius Pickard**

Last month's state budget estimated the cost of the 2 gigawatt Borumba pumped hydro [<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/qld-to-commit-14b-for-mega-pumped-hydro-project-20230609-p5dfba>] project in the Sunshine Coast hinterland to be \$14 billion. The larger, more complex 5 gigawatt Pioneer-Burkedin project in North Queensland is expected to cost a lot more.

If the pumped hydro projects are not ready in time, the Palaszczuk government has said it would keep its state-owned coal-fired power stations open for longer.

While most Queensland voters in last week's AFR/Freshwater Strategy poll called for the Palaszczuk government to cut its new coal royalty scheme [<https://www.afr.com/politics/queenslanders-back-mining-royalty-cuts-20230705-p5dlto>] to allow companies such as BHP to invest in new projects, Mr Crisafulli said he did not support scrapping the new royalty tiers.

He said the \$15 billion in extra coal royalties reaped this financial year had already been allocated to spending he was not prepared to cut.

"I'm not going to jeopardise the things those revenues are attached to," he said.

Mr Crisafulli used his speech at the LNP state convention in Brisbane on Sunday to target the long-term Palaszczuk government over its failings in the health system, youth justice and the housing crisis.

He said ambulance ramping was 15 per cent when the Palaszczuk government came to office in 2015, 30 per cent before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and was now 43 per cent.

"Queensland's ambulance ramping is the worst in the country," he said.

"After nearly a decade in power, Queensland's health system under the Palaszczuk government is broken. The Queensland health crisis is getting worse under Labor."



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