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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

10 November 1983

Following the recent decisions taken by Cabinet and Caucus on a range of uranium issues, the Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTEC) has been asked by the Government to conduct an inquiry into a number of issues relating to Australia's role in the nuclear fuel cycle.

The inquiry will examine in particular:

- . Australia's nuclear safeguards arrangements, giving particular attention to the effectiveness of the bilateral and multilateral agreements and to the scope for strengthening these agreements;
- . the opportunities for Australia through the conditions of its involvement in the nuclear fuel cycle to further advance the cause of nuclear non-proliferation having regard to the policies and practices of recipient countries; and
- . the adequacy of existing technology for handling and disposal of waste products by consumer countries, and the ways in which Australia can further contribute to the development of safe disposal methods.

The inquiry will be conducted by a working party of Council members and will be under the personal direction of the Chairman, Professor Ralph Slatyer. Others may also be co-opted as consultants and advisers to the working party to provide specialised knowledge on particular matters.

The Council's working party will examine the considerable range of evidence that has already been gathered on the subject matter of the inquiry, and will seek additional information from technical experts.

It will be calling for written submissions from those organisations and bodies that have an interest in these matters.

The attachments provide some background information on the membership of the working party and of the Council.

Membership of ASTEC's
Working Party on Uranium Matters

Professor R.O. Slatyer, AO, FAA, FRS
Professor of Biology, Research School of Biological
Sciences,
Australian National University,
Chairman of ASTEC
(Convenor)

Professor J.H. Carver
Director, Research School of Physical Sciences,
Australian National University,
Deputy Chairman of ASTEC

Professor D.H. Green
Professor of Geology,
The University of Tasmania

Mr K.H. McLeod
Federal Secretary
Australian Insurance Employees' Union

Professor J.W. Nevile, FASSA
Professor of Economics,
The University of New South Wales

Mr L.S. Zampatti
Managing Director
Castlemain Tooheys Limited

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

The functions of the Council as defined in its Act are to investigate and to furnish information and advice to the Commonwealth Government on issues related to science and technology.

As the Government's principal source of independent advice on science and technology matters, ASTEC maintains a broad overview of the science and technology activities of Government departments and agencies, universities and private enterprise. In addition to providing advice to the Government on new proposals and Budget matters relating to science and technology, the Council prepares reports in response to specific requests by the Government or the Prime Minister, and on its own initiative.

ASTEC is an independent statutory body, established by Parliament in 1978. It reports to the Prime Minister and is therefore analogous to Advising Bodies to Heads of Government in other leading countries.

PROFESSOR R.O. SLATYER

Professor Ralph Slatyer, AO, FAA, FRS, was appointed as Chairman of ASTEC in December 1982.

Professor Slatyer is a Professor of Biology at the Research School of Biological Sciences in the Australian National University. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science and the Royal Society and the United States National Academy of Sciences. He recently served for three years in Paris as Australia's Ambassador to UNESCO during which he participated in a number of international science and technology activities.

His previous service to the Government included membership of the Australian Research Grants Committee, the interim ASTEC, the Australian National Commission for UNESCO, the Policy Advisory Committee and Board of Management of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and the Advisory Committee of the Australian Biological Resources Study. Prior to joining ANU Professor Slatyer achieved distinction in research carried out during fifteen years with CSIRO. In addition he holds, and has held, a number of posts in international committees and councils.