



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

1 MAY 1986

I have sent the following letter today to the Honourable Member for Kooyong.

"Dear Mr Peacock

Further to my answer to your Question without Notice in the House today on the Chernobyl nuclear accident, I hereby provide supplementary information on the points you raised.

As I mentioned in my answer, the Government has been taking action specifically to address the most immediate concerns of the health and safety of Australians in the affected area. We have been in contact with the appropriate overseas authorities who have access to the relevant data. We have also been in touch with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The Department of Foreign Affairs is co-ordinating Australia's international response at this stage. All relevant technical agencies are being kept fully informed and are a major source of advice. Australia has a deservedly high reputation for its active commitment and contribution to nuclear safeguards, as well as the safety and health aspects of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Although there is no multilateral mechanism which requires the Soviet Union to seek international assistance in the event of an accident, the IAEA has radiation emergency assistance procedures which can be activated at the request of a member state requiring emergency assistance.

The IAEA, in conjunction with other international organisations, has also established strict safety standards for the nuclear industry. The USSR is a member of the Agency. Adherence to these standards is not mandatory but it is the normal practice of Western countries, including Australia, to use them as benchmarks for regulating their nuclear industries. The IAEA and other international organisations have also established international benchmarks in radiation protection.

Australia over the years has supported efforts by the IAEA to create an international nuclear safety convention seeking to avoid and if necessary cope with disasters such as that at Chernobyl. Regrettably they have not yet received the necessary widespread international support.

The Government believes that the need for international arrangements should be examined again, particularly in the areas of early warning and emergency assistance. It is considering an initiative for multilateral measures to that end which would be promoted bilaterally as well.

I should like to thank you again for your constructive contribution to the national debate on this serious and disturbing issue.

Yours sincerely

R.J.L. Hawke

The Hon. Andrew Peacock, MP  
Member for Kooyong  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600"