

Coalition seizes on Wall Street banks and Microsoft plans to invest in nuclear energy

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24 September 2024

Coalition says Labor is 'isolated' on nuclear energy plan as major US banks announce plans to back tripling of global output

Moves by Wall Street banks and US companies to increase investment in nuclear energy show Labor's renewables plan is 'making Australia isolated on the international stage', the Coalition has warned.

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Moves by Wall Street banks and US companies to increase investment in nuclear energy show Labor's renewables plan is "making Australia isolated on the international stage," the Coalition has warned.

The opposition has seized on an announcement by 14 of the world's largest financial institutions, including Bank of America and Goldman Sachs, that they would back efforts to triple the world's nuclear energy capacity by 2050, arguing the investment interest shows Labor is out of step.

But the federal government is ramping up pressure on the Coalition to produce costings for its election pledge to build seven nuclear power plants by the mid-2030s, arguing the investment situation in Australia is very different to countries with established nuclear industries.

Opposition climate change and energy spokesman Ted O'Brien said the most advanced economies, biggest companies and largest banks were "embracing nuclear energy but somehow Anthony Albanese thinks he knows something they don't".

"Not only does Labor claim to know the economics of nuclear better than companies like Microsoft who signed a massive nuclear deal, but they also think they can run the numbers better than (US banks and financiers) who have come out in favour of nuclear energy," he said.



Coalition climate change and energy spokesman Ted O'Brien says Labor is out of step with the world on nuclear energy. Picture: NewsWire / Martin Ollman
Mr O'Brien described Labor's energy policy as the "world's dumbest".

"As an historically free trading liberal economy, our rejection of zero-emissions nuclear energy is making us a stagnant nation amid a world that is steaming ahead with next generation technology," he said.

Goldman Sachs is one of 14 institutions to announce it supports triple the world's nuclear energy output. Picture: Michael Santiago/ Getty Images

Microsoft has announced a power purchase agreement that would enable the restart of an 835 megawatt nuclear facility in Pennsylvania that was retired in 2019.

In a statement, Microsoft said complete grid decarbonisation would require a "multi-technology approach" including wind, solar, geothermal, clean hydrogen and nuclear, along with storage and transmission infrastructure.

Last month Microsoft Australia confirmed it was on track to power all of its domestic data centres with renewable energy by next year.



Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen says nuclear power is too expensive in the Australian energy context. Picture: NewsWire / Martin Ollman

But Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen has hit back at the Coalition's attempt to narrowcast Labor's policy as one of "renewables only" saying that was just "part of their spin".

He also criticised the opposition’s lack of costings around its nuclear proposal, highlighting a new report by the International Energy Economics and Finance Association, which factored in the 80-year lifespan of reactors and still found an “enormous” impact on Australian power bills.



Major US financial institutions have announced plans to invest in nuclear. Picture: Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP

Mr Bowen acknowledged getting Australia to 82 per cent renewables was “no small thing”.

“It’s a big change for the country, but it’s also got to be supported by a well-detailed plan to back it by new storage, batteries primarily, but also pumped hydro,” he told ABC.

“We have policies in place to do that.”

Mr Bowen said coal and nuclear were both unsuitable power source to perform the peaking and firming role required to support intermittent renewables, which was where Labor saw a role for gas.

A spokeswoman for Mr Bowen said Labor’s reliable renewables plan the only one “supported by experts and investors” to deliver clean, cheap and resilient energy.

“The Coalition know there is no investment demand to build expensive nuclear reactors in Australia, which is why they won’t tell Australians just how much their nuclear scheme will cost through higher taxes, and higher energy bills,” she said.