



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Nuclear Energy**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 25 February 2020**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> O'Brien, Ted, MP	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (19:45): It feels quite odd to be rising in this chamber tonight to give credit to the Australian Workers Union and the CFMEU. I am happy to do so—

Opposition members interjecting—

**Mr TED O'BRIEN:** and I thank those opposite for saying, 'Hear, hear!' You have to give credit where it's due, and in this case it's because the Labor Party is rudderless at the moment; they don't have leadership when it comes to energy policy and climate change. That is why the AWU and the CFMEU have been brave enough to raise their voice. They know that the rank and file of the labour movement are not being heard by those opposite in this chamber—an elite mob who join hands with those pixies at the bottom of the garden, the Greens, who love to dance and run for the high moral ground without substance. And so the AWU and the CFMEU Victoria Branch have taken a stance that I agree with. They have said that, if we are indeed to try to lower emissions in this country, we need to at least assess and consider the possibility of nuclear technology—in particular, small modular reactors. They're dead right.

The reason the labour movement is having to voice this opinion is that the Labor leadership are void of that leadership. They are very happy to come out and talk about a 2050 net zero emissions target and grab that headline, but they do so without any plan whatsoever. They are shrill in their opposition to even considering the possibility of nuclear technology despite the fact that it is a technology that generates over 11 per cent of the electricity across the globe today. They are more than happy to try to take the high moral ground and talk about climate change as an existential threat to life as we know it. Yet they refuse to even consider the possibility of the cleanest form of industrial energy the world has ever seen; they are not even prepared to consider it.

No-one on the side of the House, including me, is suggesting that nuclear technology—even small nuclear reactors—is an absolute certainty for this country. What we are suggesting is that this new and emerging technology should at least be assessed, should at least be considered as part of our future energy mix. Yet the Labor Party leadership, who proclaim that they are the champions of reducing emissions, blankly refuse to even consider it. It is rank hypocrisy of the highest order. How can they look their constituents in the eye and say they care about reducing emissions and climate change and, in the very same breath, refuse to even consider new and emerging nuclear technologies? It's an absolute joke and they need to be called out for it.

So the AWU and the CFMEU are now the shining lights. There is at least a possibility that we might have the sensible debate that the people of this country deserve. We can come up with a 2050 target, as Labor has with its zero plan. We've all read that book, we know how it ends, and here we have it again—*The Return 2.0*—with zero substance. But what we have when it comes to the nuclear debate is evidence of rank hypocrisy. Unless they change their tune and at least listen to their own rank and file, Australians will be the losers—and that is something we all have to fight against.