

SCER SUMMARY

Best practice in uranium project assessment and approval: findings and conclusions

The ‘best practices’ in uranium assessment and approval on the basis of the research are:

- Assessment and approval processes carried out through a single point of contact between the company and authorities and regardless of how many governments and authorities are involved. Authorities engage with the company as far as possible with a unified approach, notwithstanding the different legislative and political conditions under which they may operate
- Mere coordination is insufficient; whole-of-government decision-making requiring alignment of policy and practice between and within State authorities works best: between and within Commonwealth authorities and between the State/s and the Commonwealth
- Best practice is where, prior to the start of the assessment process, agreement to be reached between the proponent and the authorities collectively on the assessment process with authorities having the authority to commit to the agreement. This agreement would cover:
 - The assessment and approval pathway to be followed
 - Data requirements
 - Timing and scheduling
 - How departures from the pathway are to be dealt with
 - Mechanisms for resolving problems and issues that arise during the process
- Authorities work best when their role is to manage the technical assessment and approval process and provide advice to ministers on applications against the legislated and agreed criteria;
- Best practice is where authorities:
 - Employ sufficient technical expertise and other resources to enable them to meet the expectations established in agreements with proponents
 - Acquire requisite knowledge of the history and nature of the project under consideration
 - Have sufficient resources to assess uranium mining applications, including multiple and simultaneous applications, in accordance with agreed time scales
 - Clarify the decision-making particular authorities of officials and their relationships with authorities collectively
 - Equip themselves with the necessary expertise to assess the data provided by companies and enable them to frame requirements reflecting the specific properties of uranium in the context of the particular project under consideration. Beyond those arrangements, there will be no need to require of companies special obligations on account of the fact that the project concerns uranium.
- Best practice is where proponents:
 - Prepare thoroughly for the assessment and approval process

- Make applications and present them for assessment against criteria in accordance with both the legislated process and the expectations established in the initial engagement with the approval organisation
 - Thoroughly understand the economic, environmental and social impact of their projects before embarking on the assessment and approval process
 - Comprehensively assess risk (especially environmental risk) and provide sufficient information of an appropriate standard to demonstrate how risks are to be managed
 - Engage with stakeholder communities to build their social licence to operate during the development process
 - Provide data that is unique to uranium and expect to meet requirements that reflect the specific properties of uranium in the context of the particular project under consideration.
- Best practice occurs where companies and authorities establish dedicated teams with necessary expertise to work through the process
 - Best ministerial practice is to identify and operate in the public interest, make informed decisions on the basis of advice and then make decisions known to all stakeholders including the public
 - Best practice is where companies and the approval organisation continue to engage after the approval has been given and agree a process to consciously capture and share knowledge gained as a result of participation in the assessment and approval process; where there will be a 'no regrets' joint review after each application is decided; and where lessons learned are implemented.