

[Home](#) » [National](#) » Article

Sell India uranium: Nelson

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FEDERAL Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson has reiterated calls for Australia to sell uranium to India, despite fears of instability on the subcontinent following last week's assassination of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto.

In August, the Howard government made an in-principle agreement to sell uranium to India on the condition that the uranium be used for peaceful purposes and that India sign a civil nuclear co-operation agreement with the United States.

But Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has vowed not to proceed with uranium sales to India until it becomes a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Despite this, Dr Nelson yesterday repeated Coalition support for uranium sales to India as a way of combating climate change.

India was a major emitter of greenhouse gases with growing energy needs, so "it's important that we proceed" with uranium sales, he said.

"I don't believe Australia selling or not selling (uranium to India) will make any material difference (to the stability of the subcontinent)."

He said Mr Rudd could not on one hand agree to interim and long-term targets for cutting emissions without "assisting a nation like India, with burgeoning energy demands, to reduce its carbon footprint".

He said it was important that Australia "proceed with the agreement" made with India by the Howard government.

In an interview with *The Age*, Dr Nelson demanded the Rudd Government guarantee the future of work-for-the-dole, saying he feared a plan to change the name of the scheme was the first step in dismantling it.

Employment Participation Minister Brendan O'Connor is considering dumping the name "work-for-the-dole", according to a report in *The Australian* this month.

Although Mr O'Connor said the Rudd Government supported mutual obligation, Dr Nelson has questioned this "given Labor's trenchant opposition to work-for-the-dole" in the past.

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