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## **TRUMP TEAM FOCUSED ON NEW ENERGY STRATEGY**

Robert Pritchard

Within days of Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 US presidential election, he appointed experienced energy industry executive Chris Wright as the Secretary of Energy.

This was not an appointment based on personality or experience so much as it was a matter of the US's own energy security.

President Trump directed Wright to "solidify the United States as a global energy leader long into the future".

Trump more specifically directed Wright to ensure that enough energy be made ready to protect US economic and national security, as well as its military preparedness.

Trump also directed Wright to establish the US as the leading producer of rare earths and other non-fuel minerals.

A sharp contrast between US and UK energy policies has emerged.

Upon the UK's general election in July 2024, Prime Minister Keir Starmer emphasised that the UK would reduce its emissions to net zero by the end of the century and would aim to become a "clean energy superpower".

On February 5, 2025, Wright instructed the Department of Energy to unleash what he called "the golden era of American energy dominance".

But none of this went far enough for Trump. He wasn't about to risk the possibility of his new energy policy being left to languish in the corridors of the Department of Energy.

On February 14, Trump established a new body called the National Energy Dominance Council (NEDC) and instructed it to deliver a national energy strategy to the White House within 100 days.

The NEDC has effectively become a special-purpose cabinet all of its own, with an initial membership of 19 officials.

Wright is only second in charge of the NEDC. The job of chairing it has been given to the new Secretary of the Interior, Doug Burgum. As chair of the NEDC, Burgum will also serve as a standing member of the US National Security Council.

The NEDC was given 100 days from February 14 to provide the president with a national energy dominance strategy.

The main purpose of the strategy is to cut red tape and facilitate private sector investment across all sectors of the energy economy, promoting innovation and eliminating unnecessary regulation.

To the extent of their respective abilities, all US government agencies will be expected to facilitate the development of electricity generation capacity, electricity infrastructure, natural gas pipelines, the reopening of closed power plants and the development of nuclear power capacity with the latest technology, including small modular reactors and micro-reactors.

The NEDC will perform a broad consultative and advisory function. It will for example advise the president on energy market reviews and investment incentives.

The performance of the NEDC's functions will not be confined to the Department of Energy or any other single department. The NEDC will have a direct reporting line to the president through the office of the president's chief of staff.

Will any of these strategic changes have any effect? They certainly will if they change the investment climate.

Any improvements in the US may also have follow-on effects on Australia's domestic energy industries.

On the export front, Australian energy investors could find themselves competing against stronger US rivals.

All investors need to anticipate what the US energy strategy will say. They have until the end of May to prepare for considerable change. Having eyes and ears in Washington will be indispensable.

Australia has an archaic ban on nuclear energy projects that a Peter Dutton-led Opposition would be almost certain to repeal. The next election is likely to be held around the time that Trump receives his first national energy dominance strategy.

Dutton's LNP is keen to use nuclear power as a method of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in energy production, along with clean coal and LNG

Nuclear power is used for electricity generation in over 30 countries and more are looking at the possibility.

The AUKUS initiative has guaranteed that Australia will use nuclear energy for submarine propulsion. Nuclear power could now also be considered for civil generation.

In the US, small-scale, mobile nuclear reactors are at an advanced stage of development as a strategic asset to back up power supply to the US military.

It may soon be feasible for the Australian mining industry to install nuclear microreactors across its mining industries.

Diversity of technology is the key to bridging the gap between the climate problem and the climate solution – it may be the key to the success of the entire energy transition. It may end up being the key aspect of the US's energy dominance strategy.

*Robert Pritchard is executive director of the Energy Policy Institute of Australia.*

