

Nuclear...Or not?

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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After all the fuss last year around the speed with which the energy minister was pushing through the country's nuclear programme, it seems that the procurement process have been quietly swept under the carpet for the time being.



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On or off?

The Democratic Alliance (DA) was very quick to pronounce the programme mothballed after Minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson informed a parliamentary committee that the April 1 deadline in the procurement process had not been met, and that no new date had been set.

Of course, the department of energy was equally quick to deny this, saying in a statement that the “process to procure had been delayed for more consultations but had not stalled”.

“There is a consultation process with key stakeholders that the department of energy has undertaken before issuing the request for proposals (RFP).”

“This consultation process has not yet been concluded and the RFP will be issued as soon as this process is concluded. The process is continuing and should not be rushed,” it said in a statement.

Not a popular choice

Besides the fact that the proposed six nuclear power stations would come with a price tag of R1trn, a number of interest groups, including the official opposition, voiced concerns about where the money was going to come from. There were also rumblings about the less-than-transparent way in which a Russian and Chinese service providers were being courted.

Questions were also raised about how realistic providing 9,6GW of nuclear power by 2030 is, given the continuous delays in getting the coal-fired station, Medupi, up and running.

On the other hand, the renewable energy procurement process has worked extremely well, with all projects being delivered on time. Begging the questions why renewables weren't being considered as a serious contender to nuclear power.

Then there's also the concerns about safety following the Fukushima disaster a few years ago.

Eskom scrambling for solutions

Cash-strapped power utility Eskom, which relies heavily on coal for electricity generation, is scrambling to keep the lights on and raise the capital needed to build new coal-fired units and maintain its existing fleet of plants.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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