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NuScale and the Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS) have mutually agreed to terminate the Carbon Free Power Project (CFPP)

As part of the CFPP launched in 2015, UAMPS proposed deploying a 12 x 60 MW (720 MW) NuScale SMR plant at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) site.

UAMPS is an energy services intermodal agency of the State of Utah established in 1980. UAMPS provides a variety of power supply, transmission and other services to its 47 members, which include community-owned power utilities in six western states – Utah, California, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico and Wyoming. Members can choose which UAMPS projects they participate in. Initially 33 members subscribed with power sales exceeding 150 MW. A report by the Idaho Policy Institute, Boise State University showed a substantial positive economic impact for the area.

In November 2020, NuScale announced an increase in the power output of a NuScale module from 60 MWe to 77MWe and options for 4 module (308 MW), 6 module (462 MW) and 12 Module (924 MW) plants. Since UAMPS were not seeing any electricity demand increase in their States, they opted for the 6 module (462 MW) option. By August 2021 the number of member subscribers had reduced to 27 with a commitment to 103 MW. The project has to compete with low-cost gas generation. Members are understandably nervous at being the first project of a new technology at a time of increasing finance and material costs in a volatile competitive electricity market.

On 9 November 2023, NuScale and UAMPS mutually agreed to terminate the project as they are unable to increase the number of subscribers.

The decision not to proceed appears to have been driven by the challenge that confronts all large infrastructure projects: a combination of the risk of scale, completion risk and market risk. None of these risks are unfamiliar to bankers and institutional investors in the USA and Australia.

NuScale still have the advantage of being the only SMR with a US NRC Generic Design Approval (GDA). NuScale have other projects in the USA and abroad which may be able to take advantage of the equipment already manufactured and the agreed DOE funding.

There are many SMR vendors in the race to be first to achieve successful deployment.

There is also a growing interest in transportable microreactors of 10 MW or less output to replace diesel-powered generators in off-grid applications such as mine sites and remote communities. There are many such potential projects in Australia.

SMR Nuclear Technology Pty Ltd will continue to monitor all projects worldwide to determine the most suitable for Australian conditions.