

Joint Standing Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs, defence and trade
11 August 2020

AGENCY: ANSTO (Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation)

TOPIC: Rare Earth Processing

REFERENCE: Page 9

QUESTION TEXT:

Senator AYRES: I too was interested in learning a bit more about rare-earth processing and a bit more about ANSTO's business model—how long ANSTO has been engaging with the industry in doing that kind of work, how many private-sector partners ANSTO has been working with and what the plan is for the future of that kind of work. It seems to me to be an important adjunct to ANSTO's traditional role and it'd be useful to understand more about it. I'm not sure we'll get to the bottom of all those issues in this hearing, but could you give us an outline of how long you've been doing that work and the kinds of clients you've been working with. It would be good, over time, to understand more about the revenue plan there is for that kind of work—how much of a contribution companies make to ANSTO when you're setting up those pilot projects.

ANSWER

ANSTO plays a leading role in the development of rare earth processing capabilities in Australia, and has been engaged in this work since the 1990's. ANSTO's Minerals group provides specialised consulting based on its extensive experience in rare earth process development and piloting, all the way through to the final high purity products. The Minerals group is also working closely with the Critical Minerals Facility Office in support of the development of alternative rare earth supply chains.

The work performed for external clients is on a commercial fee-for-service basis. The unit's average revenue over the last five years has been \$7.6 million per annum. ANSTO uses part of its general appropriation funding to support the ongoing development and maintenance of this capability.

More information can be found here: <https://www.ansto.gov.au/products-services/minerals>