

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Economics References Committee

Inquiry into Australia's sovereign naval shipbuilding capability

15 October 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000270

Monitoring of all mobile portable sources of radiation

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 3

Senator: Kim Carr

Question:

Senator KIM CARR: I'll ask you another question. Currently, you're responsible for the regulation of monitoring equipment for mobile portable sources of radiation, are you not?

Dr Larsson: We do that under the arrangement with port monitoring, yes.

Senator KIM CARR: That's right. So even if there were a claim that we were to do all of this training and evaluation in someone else's country—we'd be at their beck and call—you'd still be responsible for the monitoring of all mobile portable sources of radiation onshore? Is that correct?

Dr Larsson: Yes—I can't really answer that question because, again, the question is hypothetical. I would need to look at the scenario and I would need to look at what kinds of licenses and authorisations are being sought—

Senator KIM CARR: Can you take that on notice?

Dr Larsson: based on the ARPANSA Act and the regulations.

Senator KIM CARR: I see. Have you seen the agreement? Have you seen the proposals which are being advanced by the government?

Dr Larsson: Yes.

Senator KIM CARR: You have seen them?

Dr Larsson: Yes.

Senator KIM CARR: So you'll be able to take on notice the question that I've just asked you?

Dr Larsson: I can take that on notice.

Answer:

ARPANSA regulates Commonwealth users of radiation. This means that only radiation sources used by Commonwealth entities are regulated by ARPANSA.

ARPANSA has established a radiation monitoring system for nuclear-powered warship (NPW) visits. The potential for the external radiation exposure of personnel in the vicinity of a NPW at an alongside berth is checked at regular intervals by radiation surveys of areas designated as free for public access. The potential for radiation exposure from the consumption of seafood is kept under surveillance by a program of marine environmental monitoring. Sensitive, high volume seawater monitoring and analyses in the vicinity of the berth or anchorage are undertaken before and after visits to verify there have been no environmental releases of radiation.

A radiation monitoring system is available during each NPW visit to provide early detection of a reactor incident of sufficient severity to possibly cause a major release of fission products to the environment. This early warning system is complemented by arrangements for notification by the NPW should an incident occur.

ARPANSA, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation and the Australian Defence Forces are the main Commonwealth agencies providing radiological support to the emergency plans. The coordination of the Australian Government response is the responsibility of Emergency Management Australia as specified in the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework.

The immediate monitoring response to a NPW accident is provided by local Radiation Monitoring Groups, comprising State radiation health, emergency services personal or navy reservists under the direction of an ANSTO health physicist. ARPANSA provides OSL monitors, analyses marine samples and in event of a NPW incident it may be requested to provide additional teams and the Commonwealth Technical Advisor to support the State response through the COMDISPLAN.

Any monitoring in ports outside of the Australian jurisdictions would be subject to the plans and arrangements, and requirements, of that jurisdiction.