Senate Standing Committees on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australia's sovereign naval shipbuilding capability
Friday, 15 October 2021

Public Hearing

AGENCY: Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation

TOPIC: LEGISLATION

REFERENCE: Hansard Question

QUESTION DATE: 15 October 2021

QUESTION No.: 1

What acts do you believe will need to be changed to facilitate the development of nuclear submarines and what needs to be changed in the ANSTO Act?

ANSWER

Over the next 18 months, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, through the AUKUS trilateral effort on conventionally-armed nuclear-powered submarines, will examine the full suite of requirements that underpin the delivery of these submarines, including any legislative changes.

ANSTO is able to support this effort under the terms of its existing legislation.

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TOPIC: OPAL STAFF

REFERENCE: Hansard Question

QUESTION DATE: 15 October 2021

QUESTION No.: 2

How many staff are involved in the operation of the OPAL reactor?
ANSWER

It takes approximately 70 staff to safely and reliably operate and maintain the OPAL multipurpose reactor, with those personnel approximately split equally across engineering, operations, and maintenance teams. With inclusion of production staff to enable the full utilisation of the reactor, including those involved in radioisotope production, that number jumps to approximately 90 to 100 staff.

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TOPIC: Nuclear Reactor Requirements

REFERENCE: Hansard Question

QUESTION DATE: 15 October 2021

QUESTION No.: 3

What does it take to operate a reactor such as OPAL? Including training requirements.
ANSWER

It takes a dedicated team of staff with specialised skills to operate a reactor. For the licensing of a Reactor Operator, the training program includes approximately six to seven months of classroom training and approximately five months of on-the-job training (approximately one year in total), comprising a mixture of written examinations, practical examinations, and panel interviews in front of management and our nuclear safety regulator. These examinations are designed to demonstrate competence in reactor physics, reactor safety case, emergency response, radiation safety, reactor systems, security, human factors, communications, and other elements relating to the role. Both written and verbal examinations are repeated every three years, and these examinations are performed in front of the regulator. Engineering, maintenance, and production teams also have role-specific training requirements that focus on the unique reactor systems associated with their roles.