

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 2013-14
21 November 2013

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ORGANISATION (ANSTO)

TOPIC: Lucas Height facility

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, Thursday 21 November 2013, page 77)

QUESTION No.: SI-20

Senator LUDLAM: That is fine. That is consistent with what you have said in the past. Just briefly, what is the status of works to upgrade the storage capacity at ANSTO's existing Lucas Heights facility? Have formal works actually commenced there or are you still in the planning stages?

Ms Constable: Could we take that on notice?

Senator LUDLAM: I probably should have directed that to ANSTO. I missed them. If there is any info you can provide us—

Ms Constable: Absolutely.

ANSWER

On 29 November 2013, the independent nuclear regulator, the CEO of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) issued the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) with a licence to site and construct a temporary waste storage facility at its Lucas Heights campus. In his statement of reasons, the CEO made it clear that he regarded this store as an interim measure only, and he expected to see further progress towards the creation of a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility.

The facility will be used to temporarily store a small amount of waste arising from the re-processing of spent fuel used by Australia's now retired HIFAR reactor in the production of life-saving nuclear medicines. Under international agreements, the fuel is being reprocessed in France and must return to Australia by the end 2015. The temporary facility will remain until the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility is able to accept the waste for permanent storage.

Construction of the store is expected to commence by mid-2014.