

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

DEST Question No. E731_04

Senator Carr asked on 18 February 2004, EWRE Hansard page 72

Question:

“Under that scenario [extending fuel supplies for HIFAR by reducing the power of the reactor], what is the last operational date [for HIFAR]? ...Can you supply sufficient isotopes if you operate on that basis?”Could you give me a date of the absolute cut-off point?

Answer:

HIFAR

ANSTO has provided the following response:

No. The operation of HIFAR at a lower power would lead to a significant cut in the production of radioisotopes. For example, the operation of HIFAR at 5 MW would lead to a 50% cut in production of technetium-99m generators (used in about 70 per cent of all Australian nuclear medicine applications - that is, approximately 410,000 treatments in 2002-03 - to target selected organs such as the heart, lungs, brain, and bones) and of iodine-131 (used in the diagnosis and treatment of thyroid disorders). Other widely used radiopharmaceuticals such as yttrium-90 (used in the treatment of secondary liver cancer) and samarium-153 (used to provide effective pain relief from metastatic bone pain) could not be produced at all.

Under the provisions of the licence which ARPANSA has issued to ANSTO for the operation of HIFAR, any extension could not go beyond 31 December 2006.