

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 3

Output Group: 3.2 – Assistance for Science Collaboration and Innovation

DEST Question No. E517_05

Senator Allison asked on February 16 2005, EWRE Hansard page 54.

Question:

The United States ... never intended the Acceptance Program to serve as a fuel management solution for all research reactors in perpetuity –

And –

Under international law, all nations that enjoy the benefits of nuclear technology are ultimately responsible for their own SNF (spent nuclear fuel) management.

Why do you think that paragraph was inserted in the contract?

Answer:

Supplemental Analysis for the Foreign Research Reactor Spent Nuclear Fuel Acceptance Program

These sentences are not included in a contract but rather in the Supplemental Analysis for the Foreign Research Reactor Spent Nuclear Fuel Acceptance Program, a document prepared by the United States Department of Energy. This document was appended as Attachment 2 to ANSTO's letter to Dr John Loy, CEO of ARPANSA, dated 17 December 2004 and published on the ARPANSA website. The relevant paragraph, presented in its entirety below, presents a justification for inclusion of the OPAL reactor in the extended spent fuel acceptance program.

Extract from Supplemental Analysis:

In addition to extending the timeframe for acceptance of currently eligible FRR SNF, DOE proposes extending eligibility to one research reactor that will come online in 2005. This represents a change in the Acceptance Policy established in 1996, because new reactors coming online after May 1996 were specifically excluded from eligibility. The United States included this provision because it never intended the Acceptance Program to serve as a fuel management solution for all research reactors in perpetuity. Under international law, all nations that enjoy the benefits of nuclear technology are ultimately responsible for their own SNF management. However, the unique geographic circumstances associated with the Australian RRR, along with the critical role Australia has played in cooperatively supporting international nonproliferation policies, and specifically in the development of new LEU fuels by contributing staff and funding, justifies an exception in this instance.