

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 3

Output Group: 3.2 – Assistance for science collaboration and innovation

DEST Question No. E142_04

Senator Allison asked on 4 June 2003, EWRE Hansard page 378

Question:

If we can look at the section on the blocks that had been vitrified the report says “the blocks were not monoliths as they had fractured during cooling...monoliths could have been advantageous had they been produced”. In other words, this is a criticism of the ISV process that the blocks were cracking. Can you explain why it was decided that, rather than let those blocks cool, which I understand under normal circumstances take some months, cold water was poured on them? Do you accept that by pouring water over some, if not all, led to the fracturing about which you complain as being a failure in the process?

Answer:

Fracturing of ISV blocks

The Maralinga Rehabilitation Technical Advisory Committee (MARTAC) rejected the hypothesis that the use of water on the in situ vitrification (ISV) blocks during demolition of some of the blocks for quality assurance purposes explains why the blocks were fractured. The matter is discussed in the Annex to the MARTAC report.

If usage of water to cool blocks contributed to their fracturing, those left to cool naturally should have been monoliths. In fact those cooled naturally also exhibited fracturing.