

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 3

Output Group: 3.2 – Assistance for science collaboration and innovation

DEST Question No. E467_06

Senator Crossin provided in writing.

Question:

The current proposal is for the facility to co-locate both low and medium level waste – is the criteria for the storage of this low level waste the same or has it changed? If so how? Is the criteria for the storage of low level and intermediate waste different or is it the same now that they will be co-located?

Answer:

Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Facility – Siting Criteria

The previous proposal for the management of low level and short-lived intermediate level radioactive waste – the national radioactive waste repository project – was solely for the disposal of such waste. The criteria for siting a disposal facility, which relies to a major extent on the physical characteristics of the site to contain the waste, are clearly different to that for siting a storage facility.

The three potential sites will be assessed for their suitability for near-surface disposal of low and short-lived intermediate level radioactive waste. This assessment will be undertaken with reference to the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Code of practice for the near-surface disposal of radioactive waste in Australia (1992)* and the International Atomic Energy Agency's Safety Requirements document *Near Surface Disposal of Radioactive Waste*. These criteria were used in the former national radioactive waste repository project.

Suitability for an intermediate level store will be assessed with reference to the ARPANSA regulatory assessment guideline *Draft Criteria for the Siting of Controlled Facilities* and the IAEA's document *Site Evaluation for Nuclear Installations*.

A storage facility – whether for only long-lived intermediate level radioactive waste or for all waste – may, in principle, be constructed at any of the three sites. The considerations relevant to a storage facility are equally applicable to storage of both low and intermediate level radioactive waste.

Collocation does not change the considerations that would apply to separate facilities for the management of low and intermediate level radioactive waste.