

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: ANSTO
Output Group: ANSTO

DEST Question No. E514_06

Senators Crossin and Wong asked on 2 November 2005, EWRE Hansard pages 16-18.

Question:

In the context of a discussion on the technical criteria for possible sites for the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Facility:

In the estimates in June when Senator Carr asked a question about this, your answer was that the technical advice at the time just went to the criteria of the sites. Can you provide me with more detail about that technical advice now that the three possible sites are known? ...Could you take on notice that question that Senator Crossin asked you about identifying precisely the technical criteria?

Answer:

Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Facility

ANSTO has provided the following response:

ANSTO has provided only general advice to DEST on selection or siting criteria for the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Facility. This advice is that publicly available in IAEA publications and referenced on their website www.iaea.org. ANSTO has also provided advice on the type, quantity and activity of the wastes it holds, as well as information on methods of containment of both low level and intermediate level waste. ANSTO has assembled a project team to provide support during the latter stages of the project.

ANSTO was not involved in the development of criteria for the National Repository or the Store. The National Repository was guided by criteria from the National Health and Medical Research Council publication No. 35, "Code of practice for the near-surface disposal of radioactive waste in Australia" (1992). ANSTO contributed to a working party that provided technical assessment of the sites against these criteria that was used in the ranking process. Siting considerations for the National Store were provided in the publication "Safe Storage of Radioactive Waste - the National Store Project: Methods for Choosing the Right Site: A Public Discussion paper, July 2001". These considerations were developed by the National Store Advisory Committee, of which ANSTO was not a member. In addition, the Department of Environment and Heritage developed further guidelines for the preparation of an EIS which listed criteria that were also used to assess sites for the National Repository.

The criteria in the above publications cover the issues mentioned by Dr Cameron in response to questions in the latest hearing, i.e. "stability of the soils, the geology of the sites, what we know about dispersion rates and what we know about rainfall". ANSTO has not provided specific advice on criteria for the three sites, but noted that the existing criteria are appropriate for the assessment of a repository at those sites.