

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2006-2007 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 3

Output Group: 3.2 – Assistance for collaboration and innovation

DEST Question No. E559_07

Senator Wong provided in writing.

Refers to DEST Question No E389_07.

Question:

- (a) Have any additional nuclear dump sites have been nominated? Please provide details.
- (b) If DEST is keeping site nominations confidential, why is this the case? At whose request was this decision made?
- (c) What is the current timeline for completion of construction and operation of the nuclear waste dump?
- (d) What stage are the siting studies up to? What has occurred so far at each site?
- (e) When will the siting studies be completed?
- (f) Does DEST receive monthly reports from the contractor? If not monthly, how often does DEST receive reports from the contractor and on what dates have they been received so far? Will DEST provide a copy of each report?
- (g) What is the size of the contract with Parsons Brinckerhoff? How much has been paid to them already?
- (h) Please provide a breakdown of how the funding to Parsons Brinckerhoff be provided. That is, is there an introductory/sign-on payment, further payments based on performance or timelines, completion payments, bonus payments etc?
- (i) Why was the environmental impact assessment delayed until 2007-08 given it was meant to occur in 2006-07? Does this delay the rest of the process?

E389_07 itemises the expenditure over the forward estimates.

National Radioactive Waste Management

	2006-07 \$'000	2007-08 \$'000	2008-09 \$'000	2009-10 \$'000
<i>Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Facility</i>				
Siting Studies	1,760	—	—	—
EIS	—	3,910	—	—
AR PANSAsiting licence	—	—	1,496	—
Communications	511	304	311	—
Consultants – scientific advice	373	381	388	—
Other	597 ^a	—	—	281 ^b
Total	3,241	4,595	2,195	281

^a Provision for cost associated with accessing/acquiring interests in land.

^b CRWMF recurrent base funding.

- (j) In E389_07, please provide a list of the consultants receiving approximately \$1 million in funding over three years. Have all of these been selected? If not, for what purposes does DEST expect to engage consultants? What is the projected cost of each consultancy? What has been spent on consultants so far?
- (k) Will the \$1.76 million listed for siting studies all go to Parsons Brinckerhoff or are there other costs involved? Please provide breakdown.
- (l) What does DEST mean by Communications in E389_07? Is this advertising to promote the waste dump? Please provide breakdown of TV buys, newspaper ads and other items that this money will be spent on, including budgeted costs of each item. What has been spent on communications so far?
- (m) E389_07 lists nearly \$900,000 that's set to be spent on "Other". Please provide a full breakdown of what is included in "other", with costs associated with each item.
- (n) Has or will DEST considered the matter of high-level waste being stored in Australia? Has DEST commissioned any consultants or internal or external work on this matter of high-level waste storage in Australia?
- (o) Have the Foreign Minister or his Department corresponded with DEST regarding high-level waste?
- (p) Is DEST in any way looking at the feasibility of Australia importing and storing high and long-lived nuclear waste from overseas?
- (q) Has DEST undertaken any work to assist Australia's role in the Nuclear Fuel Leasing Group or the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership?

Answer:

Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management

- (a) No.
- (b) Not applicable.
- (c) 2011.
- (d) All onsite work associated with services described in E562_07 has been completed. Data analysis and report writing are currently under way.
- (e) The report is due on 30 March 2007.
- (f) DEST is not receiving formal written reports from Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB). DEST has received preliminary results of some work. As these have not yet been subject to PB's quality control and review procedures, it is not considered appropriate to release this preliminary data.
- (g) The contract with PB is valued at \$1.65 million GST inclusive. PB is paid monthly in arrears. As at 13 December 2006, payments to PB total \$642,514.99 (GST inclusive).
- (h) Refer to DEST Question No. E562_07. No bonus payment is involved. See also (g) above.

(i) The original commencement date for the EIS in 2006-07 assumed completion of the initial siting studies in 2005-06. The siting studies could not commence until the Government's announcement of potential sites. DEST does not consider that this affects the overall project schedule as the ARPANSA and the Department of the Environment and Heritage have agreed to conduct a joint process for the siting licence and the EIS. The siting licence process will commence in 2007-08 rather than 2008-09.

(j) The contracts for scientific consultants are as follows:

Consultant	Contract value (ex-GST)	Paid to date (16/11/2006)
ANSTO	\$1,250,000 ^a	\$0
SouthTech Personnel	\$60,000 ^b	\$13,745 ^b

^aIncludes contribution to siting studies, EIS and ARPANSA licensing processes. Contract period 1 July 2006–30 June 2008.

^bFor period 1 July 2004–1 July 2007.

(k) The contract with PB is for \$1.5 million (excluding GST). The remaining \$276,000 (excluding GST) is part of the ANSTO consultancy.

(l) In relation to communications, see DEST Question No. E554_07.

(m) The \$597,000 listed in 2006-07 for 'other' is contingency funding for activities covered by the *Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005*. The \$281,000 in 2009-10 is unallocated contingency funding for the Facility initially approved in 2003-04 as ongoing operating costs for the now superseded National Repository project. The Government will need to further consider funding to progress the Facility project beyond 2008-09.

(n) No consultants have been engaged by DEST on this matter. See (p) below.

(o) An exchange of correspondence between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and DEST has referred to the subject of high level radioactive waste.

(p) No.

(q) No.