

ACS088350

24 February 2016

Senator Sean Edwards
Chair
Senate Economics Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Edwards,

I write in relation to my recent testimony to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee during the Budget Additional Estimates hearings that were held on 11 February 2016.

Having reviewed the Hansard of the proceedings, I wish to offer the Committee a point of clarification regarding my testimony. In answer to a question from Senator Ludlam, I made the following statement:

"I do believe you are drawing from our public works submission of a number of years ago. It is important that we are able to secure a national waste repository and store. My understanding, from discussions that I have had with the regulator, is that the regulator would be extremely uncomfortable—and I think that is a technical term for 'potentially concerned about the long-term viability of the facilities'—if there was not a national waste repository and store, or a process that was deterministic to achieve that. When that submission was made our intermediate- and low-level waste storage facilities, under various scenarios of operation, were going to be challenged in 2017." (Hansard -page 47)

Upon reflection, I realised that I inadvertently conflated two distinct elements of an ongoing process. In late 2014, ANSTO commenced a process, by way of a New Policy Proposal to Government, to secure funding for the extension of its Intermediate and Low Level Solid Waste Stores, which are due to reach capacity by early 2017. Funding for the project was provided as part of the 2015/16 federal budget (Budget 2015/16 Budget measure *Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation – interim radioactive waste storage* on page 198 of Budget Paper 2).

ANSTO is also required to obtain Parliamentary approval from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for the project. Accordingly, in December 2015 ANSTO lodged a submission with the Department of Finance. That submission is currently under consideration by the Public Works Committee.

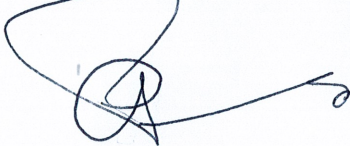
When I referred to a submission made "a number of years ago", I was in fact referring to the budget process and not the Public Works Committee Submission. Additionally, I should stress that ANSTO's position regarding the urgent need for extensions to our waste storage facilities, as set out in our Public Works Submission, remains the same. As our submission states:

"Without additional interim waste storage capacity, ANSTO's ability to operate within its regulatory framework will be compromised when its current waste storage capacity is exhausted in the first half of 2017."

Given the delays in the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility project, this risk can only be offset by the construction of the extensions to our waste storage facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify my remarks. If the Committee requires any further information or action, I will be happy to assist.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Paterson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr Adi Paterson
CEO
ANSTO