

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
National Radioactive Waste Management Amendment (Site Specification, Community Fund and
Other Measures) Bill 2020 [Provisions]

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES

TOPIC: Yes campaign and other claims

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senate Standing Committee on Economics

QUESTION No.: 5

This evidence was provided to the Committee as transcribed by Hansard:

***Senator McALLISTER:** So it's your assertion that the yes campaign was directly financially supported by the government?*

***Mr Wakelin:** Absolutely. Of course, I've argued strongly—I haven't mentioned it today—that there is a clear conflict of interest because ANSTO, owned by the Commonwealth government, is a billion dollar government corporation with a thousand employees, supported by the taxpayer yet again. Where do these people get off?*

***Senator McALLISTER:** I'm just trying to understand the means or channels by which this financial support was provided. Was it directly through the department of industry spending money on their project to explain and promote this concept to the community and through ANSTO?*

***Mr Wakelin:** Yes.*

1. Can the Department explain this evidence? Was there direct financial support for the yes campaign?
2. Often we see governments through their Department's provide information to the public, was it more along these lines?
3. Another claim was made was by Mr Sweeney from the Australian Conservation Foundation where he states "Claims that the facility is needed in order to comply with Australia's international treaty obligations and, most notably, share our obligations through the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management are also not correct". Is this an accurate assessment?

ANSWER

1. The department has not provided financial support for a 'yes campaign'.
2. The department has produced and distributed factual information, in the form of fact sheets, reports and newsletters, in hard copy and via its website. The department has also financially supported the participation of technical experts from ANSTO, Geoscience Australia, CSIRO and the engineering firm, AECOM, in open community information sessions, consultative

committee meetings, and drop-in visit sessions at its local offices. At the request of community consultative committee members, the department has also financially supported presentations and webinars involving:

- a. David Sweeney, Australian Conservation Foundation
- b. Dr Peter Karamoskos, Nuclear radiologist, Medical Association for Prevention of War
- c. Dr Margaret Beavis, Secretary, Medical Association for Prevention of War
- d. Dr Victor Gostin, University of Adelaide
- e. Dr Jim Green, Friends of the Earth, and
- f. Scott Ludlam, Australian Greens.

3. The Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management (the Joint Convention), is an international treaty to which Australia is party. It represents a commitment by participating countries to achieve and maintain a consistently high level of safety in the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste.

Articles 4 and 11 of the Joint Convention require States Parties to have regard to 'internationally endorsed criteria and standards' in developing their national policies and procedures. Those criteria and standards are developed and published by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The IAEA Nuclear Energy Series Guide *Policies and Strategies for Radioactive Waste Management* (No. NW-G-1.1) notes that a centralised waste management facility capable of processing, storage and, possibly, the disposal of all, or a large part, of the radioactive waste in a country is usually more secure, effective and efficient than the individual site approach. A number of countries with comparable radioactive waste volumes to Australia have adopted this approach. Building and operating the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF) will enable Australia to centralise and modernise radioactive waste management in accordance with international best practice.