

Economics

National Radioactive Waste Management Amendment (Site Specification, Community Fund and Other Measures) Bill 2020 [Provisions] – 30 June 2020

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Senate Economics Legislation Committee - 30 June 2020 - Q1- Woomera stakeholders - McDonald

Question reference number: 1

Senator/Member: Susan McDonald

Type of question: Spoken

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 17 July 2020

Question:

Senator McDONALD: Is Woomera always open and accessible to support a facility? What arrangements would you have for stakeholders to access the land?

Air Vice-Marshal Roberts: In terms of access to the land, we have exclusion days for different zones of the Woomera Prohibited Area, and we exclude people from the range when we're conducting tests where we believe that the template may impact their properties. That includes the mining operations that are there, the pastoralists and also the Indigenous groups that own parts of the land.

Senator McDONALD: How many stakeholders are there in Woomera?

Air Vice-Marshal Roberts: I'd have to take the number on notice, but there are 26 pastoral leases, and the Aboriginal freehold title makes up about 31 per cent of the area. There are also the mining interests on the range. We actually manage it through a coexistence framework which is overseen by a committee of South Australians, and Defence are involved in that to ensure that we provide reasonable economic access to the range whilst ensuring that it is available to conduct the testing of war material.

Answer:

The Woomera Prohibited Area has a complex range of stakeholders, and includes access for a range of cultural and economic interests balanced with Defence's capability testing requirements.

The Woomera Prohibited Area - at about 122,000 square kilometres - is mainly South Australian Crown Land; with the Maralinga Tjarutja also holding freehold title of about 34,000 square kilometres, and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara holding freehold title of about 4,000 square kilometres. The Woomera Prohibited Area is also subject to native title determinations in respect of the Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara, Arabana, Gawler Ranges and Kokatha peoples. Defence land within the Woomera Prohibited Area totals about 47 square kilometres.

There are 26 pastoral leases wholly or partially within the Woomera Prohibited Area; four mines; and about 150 mineral exploration tenements that are subject to leases or licences granted by the South Australian Government. The Woomera Prohibited Area also covers petroleum, geothermal, opal and precious stones tenements and fields, and a major conservation park.

Under Defence's legislative framework, permission or permits to access the Woomera Prohibited Area are current for:

- a. Aboriginal people exercising their rights for native title, traditional and cultural heritage activities;
- b. Twenty-six pastoral lease-holders;
- c. Four resources companies that hold mineral leases for the four established mines;
- d. Twenty-five resources companies that hold multiple exploration tenements;
- e. The owners and operators of the Tarcoola to Darwin railway; and
- f. Persons acting for, or on behalf of, South Australia.

Standing permission is also in place for public access to major roads such as the Stuart Highway and Olympic Dam Highway, and for the Woomera Village.

Access permission may be suspended and people excluded from the Woomera Prohibited Area for safety and security during periods declared by Defence for the testing of war materiel.

The Woomera Prohibited Area is also managed cooperatively under a memorandum of understanding between Defence and the South Australian Government. The memorandum supports the coexistence arrangements that recognise Defence's use of the Woomera Prohibited Area for the testing of war materiel, with access for non-Defence users of the Area determined under Defence's legislative framework.