

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]
30 June 2020

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

TOPIC: Question 2 - National Radioactive Waste Management Amendment (Site Specification, Community Fund and Other Measures) Bill 2020 [Provisions]

REFERENCE: Question on Notice

QUESTION No.: 2

Could the Department of Industry also provide the Committee with the multi-criteria assessments for the three sites listed below.

In that 2017 assessment, two sites within the WPA and one within 10km of its boundary all passed the initial multi-criteria assessment, but were subsequently assessed by Defence as unsuitable due to Defence operational requirements. The sites were:

- Woomera (Nurrunga Test Area): south of Woomera and the WPA
- Woomera (Airfield, Technical Area, Woomera Village): within the WPA, contains Woomera township and the Woomera Airfield, and on Defence land, and
- Woomera (Small Arms Test Range): within the WPA, contains built structures on site and on Defence land.

ANSWER

The assessment for the three sites is included in the response documents to Question No.1.

Additionally, in July 2017 the Department of Defence advised the following in relation to the three sites:

Site 339 – Woomera (Nurrunga Test Area): south of Woomera and the WPA

This Defence-owned land parcel is approximately 1,463 hectares and has been identified as the Nurrungar Test Area (NTA). It lies approximately 10 kilometres south of the Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA) boundary, in Woomera. The NTA houses the Joint Counter Improvised Explosive Device (JCIED) Test Facility which supports the development and testing of Counter Improvised Explosive Device capabilities for the safety and security of Australian Defence Force personnel, deployed on operational duty. Nurrungar also has Commonwealth heritage values and is of significant cultural importance to the Kokatha and Barngarla Aboriginal people. Siting a NRWMF within the NTA could result in the loss of essential Defence capability and present unintended consequences that could adversely affect operational capability that supports national security.

Site 340 – Woomera (Airfield, Technical Area, Woomera Village): within the WPA, contains Woomera township and the Woomera Airfield, and on Defence land

This site totals an area of about 3,720 hectares and is comprised of 13 separate Defence-owned land parcels that lie mainly within the WPA Red Zone. The land parcels identified include the Woomera Airfield, Technical Area and Woomera village. The site is subject to access restrictions, and non-Defence users are not permitted to access the Red Zone. In addition, persons may be excluded for safety and security during Defence weapons testing. The airfield is in constant use by manned and unmanned aircraft that may be carrying missiles, bombs and other weapons systems. The Woomera Village houses residential, short-term housing and other support services, including a tourism precinct that is accessible to members of the public.

Site 341 – Woomera (Small Arms Test Range): within the WPA, contains built structures on site and on Defence land

This site is an area of about 117 hectares and has been identified as the Small Arms Test Range in Woomera. The site lies in close proximity to the WPA airfield and Woomera Village, within the WPA Red Zone and is subject to access restrictions for safety and security during Defence testing. The area is currently used for small arms weapons testing to support Defence capability.

Defence's use of sites 340 and 341 will increase in the near future following the introduction into service of new air warfare capabilities. Therefore, establishing a NRWMP within these areas could effectively quarantine large areas of land from Defence use and result in the loss of essential Defence capability. Further, the close proximity to an operational military airfield, explosive ordnance storage and residential housing deems the NRWMP incompatible with the existing use of these areas.