

Question on notice no. 2

Portfolio question number: SI-02

2022-23 Supplementary Budget estimates

Economics Committee, Industry, Science and Resources Portfolio

Senator Barbara Pocock: asked the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation on 23 November 2022—

- (1. At Estimates, Mr Jenkinson mentioned that the current \$60 million capacity increase is a contingency in the instance that the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF) does not go ahead. He also indicated that if the NRWMF ‘goes beyond its current timing’ ANSTO may ‘have to look at additional storage on site to ensure we [they] have continued operations.’ Has ANSTO already looked at additional storage on site? If so, could you provide details of this.
2. At Estimates, Mr Jenkinson stated that in the event of a delay in the proposed NRWMF, ANSTO may need to cease nuclear medicine production, stating: “we would cease operations in some parts of our operations, which could be things like nuclear medicine”. Can you provide detail of the basis for this comment, and any reports, documents, or scenario modelling ANSTO has undertaken to inform this view?
3. Given that the proposed NRWMF is under active legal contest and remains uncertain can you outline ANSTO’s contingency planning to ensure security of nuclear medicine supply?
4. Does ANSTO accept that there are no regulatory or legal constraints to continuing interim storage (as opposed to disposal) of ILW at the Lucas Heights facility?

Answer —

Please see attachment.

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Science and Resources Portfolio
2022 - 2023 Supplementary Budget Estimates

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO)

OUTCOME: Agencies

TOPIC: NRWMF and interim storage

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Barbara Pocock

QUESTION DATE: 23 November 2022

QUESTION No.: SI-02

1. At Estimates, Mr Jenkinson mentioned that the current \$60 million capacity increase is a contingency in the instance that the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF) does not go ahead. He also indicated that if the NRWMF ‘goes beyond its current timing’ ANSTO may ‘have to look at additional storage on site to ensure we [they] have continued operations.’ Has ANSTO already looked at additional storage on site? If so, could you provide details of this.
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4. Does ANSTO accept that there are no regulatory or legal constraints to continuing interim storage (as opposed to disposal) of ILW at the Lucas Heights facility?

ANSWER

1. ANSTO has considered the types of waste streams that would need additional storage capacity, and when this would be needed, should the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF) be delayed beyond its current timing. Consideration to date has not progressed to conditioning, siting, design, licencing, funding or other considerations for waste storage expansion, which would be needed should the NRWMF be delayed beyond its current timing.
2. The comment reflects that existing waste storage at ANSTO’s Lucas Heights campus, including for the waste generated by nuclear medicine production, is based on operating limits defined in safety analysis reports and is finite. It also reflects a scenario where there are no other viable solutions to store waste.
3. ANSTO continues to work with ARWA regarding development of the NRWMF. As per the response to Question One, ANSTO has considered the types of waste streams that would need additional storage capacity, and when this would be needed, should the NRWMF be delayed beyond its current timing. ANSTO is in consultation with ARWA and Government about the anticipated timeframes for delivery of the NRWMF. ANSTO will seek to ensure sufficient lead times wherever possible for any decisions needed to deliver additional capacity at Lucas Heights to ensure continued operations, including nuclear medicine production, should the need arise.

4. Yes, noting however that if ANSTO applies for new or expanded storage facilities then ANSTO would need to follow appropriate regulatory processes.