

**Economics Legislation Committee**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Industry and Science Portfolio  
Additional Estimates 2014-15  
26 February 2015

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** ANSTO

**TOPIC:** Nuclear Waste

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator Leyonhjelm

**QUESTION No.:** AI-54

Do any private companies here or overseas manage nuclear waste? Is there a reason why a private company could not manage Australia's waste?

**ANSWER**

Radioactive waste, in the shape of disused radioactive sources, is managed by a range of private companies across Australia and overseas. However, in Australia the only centralised facilities for the long-term storage and/or disposal of radioactive waste are managed by State or Territory governments. There is no national facility for the management of radioactive waste, although there is currently a process under way that is being managed by the Department of Industry and Science.

To ANSTO's knowledge, the majority of centralised radioactive waste management facilities overseas are operated by government authorities or government-owned companies. However, there are some overseas facilities which are owned and operated by private companies. In the United States, there are a number of privately operated facilities for the disposal of low level wastes: see <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Country-Profiles/Countries-T-Z/USA--Nuclear-Fuel-Cycle/>. Other examples of private companies operating waste management facilities are provided by the Finnish and Swedish waste management programs.

On the assumption that the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility would be operated under contract to the Commonwealth, it would be subject to the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998* and *Regulations 1999*. Under Regulation 41(3)(e), any applicant (whether a public organisation or a private company) for a licence to operate a nuclear facility must demonstrate a capacity for complying with the regulations and licence conditions.