

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio
2016 - 2017 Additional Estimates
2 March 2017

DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

TOPIC: Ranger uranium mine

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 2 March 2017, page 124)

QUESTION No.: AI-68

Senator LUDLAM:

I suspect you will also have to take this one, about Ranger uranium mine, on notice. I was directed to you when we were talking to the OSS on Monday, or whenever it was. What legal mechanism do you expect would be in place after the cessation of the current Atomic Energy Act section 41 authority to ensure that Rio Tinto meets its rehab obligations? Because it is outside the statutory window that is controlled by the Atomic Energy Act, what legal mechanism will be in place to ensure that the company meets its obligations after that period has lapsed?

Mr B Wilson: We are very aware of that issue, and we are looking at it. At this point we do not have a definitive answer, but we are quite aware of that.

ANSWER

The above question asked of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science refers to Rio Tinto. I have provided the following answer on the basis that Senator Ludlam is seeking assurance on Energy Resources of Australia meeting its Ranger rehabilitation obligations.

My department is investigating appropriate mechanisms to provide for appropriate access beyond 2026. These investigations are ongoing.

With regard to financial responsibility beyond 2026, the requirement for Energy Resources of Australia to complete rehabilitation of the Ranger Project Area in accordance with the Environmental Requirements is contractually enforceable under the Ranger Uranium Project Government Agreement. Under this Agreement, Energy Resources of Australia is also required to provide a security for the cost of rehabilitating the Ranger Project Area.

The rehabilitation security is not tied to the access arrangements established under the section 41 authority issued under the *Atomic Energy Act 1953* (Cth), which provides for access for rehabilitation purposes up to 8 January 2026. Rather, the security is required until completion of all rehabilitation works is demonstrated – that is, it is required beyond 8 January 2026.