

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

AGENCY: AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ORGANISATION

TOPIC: Surplus Enriched Uranium and Plutonium

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 2 March 2017, page 58)

QUESTION No.: AI-8

Senator LUDLAM: Does the surplus enriched uranium and plutonium that would be extracted from the fuel—what is to become of that? And would we just roll existing agreements with the French—

Dr Paterson: The agreements we have with the French are that that will go into a civilian mixed oxide fuel program. So they eventually put it into reactors and burn it further.

Senator LUDLAM: 'Eventually' meaning 'never', but that would probably need another couple of hours of evidence and that is probably a bit off my brief. So I think you said the time line was 2018. Do you have that to the nearest month?

Dr Paterson: Sorry—

Senator LUDLAM: Yes, go ahead.

Dr Paterson: Just in terms of the HIFAR return fuel, I understand that that has indeed been reprocessed and is currently being used as a source of electricity in German reactors.

Senator LUDLAM: In Germany?

Dr Paterson: In Germany, yes.

Senator LUDLAM: They are planning on shutting down their entire reactor fleet though.

Dr Paterson: But they are using our uranium before they do that.

Senator LUDLAM: All right. Like I said, I am bit outside my brief, but I will do a bit of research. Thanks for that additional information.

Dr Paterson: Thank you.

Senator LUDLAM: Are you still anticipating a shipment once every five years? One less shipment obviously is welcome news, but what is the tempo of the—

Dr Paterson: We will give you an indicative schedule on notice.

Senator LUDLAM: That would be appreciated, thank you.

ANSWER

An agreement has been signed between ANSTO and French company AREVA, for AREVA to manage the reprocessing of OPAL's spent fuel assemblies between 2018 and 2030, subject to the conclusion of an intergovernmental agreement between Australia and France.

The first OPAL spent fuel shipment is scheduled to be sent to France in mid-2018. Subsequent shipments will take place every six to seven years thereafter.

In total, there will be two return shipments of Intermediate Level Waster (ILW) for the design life of OPAL. The first return of ILW resulting from the reprocessing of OPAL spent fuel is scheduled to occur between 2035 and 2040.