

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Additional Estimates 2007-08

21 February 2008

Question: AR-3
Topic: Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act (CRWMA)
Muckaty and the Northern Land Council
Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Milne asked:

At the February Additional Estimates hearing of the Economics Committee a number of issues raised by Senator Nettle on the issue of radioactive waste management were responded to by the Minister/Department as being under 'review' or 'consideration'.

These included the timeline for repeal of the CRWMA, the process for notifying stakeholders over project or process developments, the status of dialogue and agreements with the NLC, the site nomination process that will follow repeal of the CRWMA and the federal Labor government's future approach to radioactive waste management.

These questions were asked on February 21, given that the reply date to Questions on Notice for this Committee is April 11 what progress has there been on the review and consideration of these issues in this interim period?

Given that the Department acknowledges the concern and opposition of both the Central Land Council and a number of specific estate clans to the nomination of the Muckaty site how do they propose to address this following the repeal of the CRWMA?

Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act (CRWMA)

When is repeal of the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act likely to be decided and announced? In the first half of 2008? Is this dependent in any way on the site assessment work currently being undertaken by Parsons Brinkerhoff?

Will the affected communities and stakeholder organisations be contacted by the Department to notify them of the process of repeal?

Does the ALP commitment to repeal the CRWMA also entail not pursuing any of the sites that had been assessed under the Howard government's site selection process for the federal dump?

What are the specific 'matters currently under consideration' that may potentially delay the repeal of the CRWMA?

Are there any contracts signed by the previous Government that are being investigated as potential impediments to the legislative repeal?

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Muckaty and the Northern Land Council

Has the Minister met with representatives of the Northern Land Council to discuss Muckaty or any other sites in relation to a radioactive waste facility?

- a) regarding previous arrangements with the Howard government
- b) in the context of the site(s) being considered for a dump under the Labor waste management process, including whether any previous nomination will be re-submitted

When the CRWMA is repealed, would nominations of potential dump sites, such as the one submitted by the Northern Land Council for Muckaty, need to be resubmitted to comply with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (ALRA) legislation?

Is the Department intending to meet with the Northern Land Council to discuss Muckaty

- a) regarding previous arrangements with the Howard government
- b) in the context of the site(s) being considered for a dump under the Labor waste management process, including whether any previous nomination will be re-submitted

ALP approach to waste management

Federal Labor has committed to a new approach to radioactive waste management that is based on non-imposition, extensive community consultation and best practice science – can the Minister/Department detail how and when this new process will be advanced?

Answers:

At the February Additional Estimates hearing of the Economics Committee a number of issues raised by Senator Nettle on the issue of radioactive waste management were responded to by the Minister/Department as being under ‘review’ or ‘consideration’.

- These included the timeline for repeal of the CRWMA;
- The process for notifying stakeholders over project or process developments;
- The status of dialogue and agreements with the NLC;
- The site nomination process that will follow repeal of the CRWMA; and
- The federal Labor government’s future approach to radioactive waste management.

These questions were asked on February 21, given that the reply date to Questions on Notice for this Committee is April 11 what progress has there been on the review and consideration of these issues in this interim period?

Response: The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism is currently working on a radioactive waste management strategy and the Minister will make details available when it is completed and agreed within Government.

Given that the Department acknowledges the concern and opposition of both the Central Land Council and a number of specific estate clans to the nomination of the Muckaty site how do they propose to address this following the repeal of the CRWMA?

Response: The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism is currently working on a

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radioactive waste management strategy and the Minister will make details available when it is completed and agreed within Government.

Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act (CRWMA)

When is repeal of the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act likely to be decided and announced? In the first half of 2008? Is this dependent in any way on the site assessment work currently being undertaken by Parsons Brinkerhoff?

Response: This matter is under consideration by the Government.

Will the affected communities and stakeholder organisations be contacted by the Department to notify them of the process of repeal?

Response: This matter is under consideration by the Government.

Does the ALP commitment to repeal the CRWMA also entail not pursuing any of the sites that had been assessed under the Howard government's site selection process for the federal dump?

Response: This matter is under consideration by the Government.

What are the specific 'matters currently under consideration' that may potentially delay the repeal of the CRWMA?

Response: This matter is under consideration by the Government.

Are there any contracts signed by the previous Government that are being investigated as potential impediments to the legislative repeal?

Response: The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism is currently working on a radioactive waste management strategy and the Minister will make details available when it is completed and agreed within Government.

Muckaty and the Northern Land Council

Has the Minister met with representatives of the Northern Land Council to discuss Muckaty or any other sites in relation to a radioactive waste facility?

- a) regarding previous arrangements with the Howard government
- b) in the context of the site(s) being considered for a dump under the Labor waste management process, including whether any previous nomination will be re-submitted

Response: This is a matter that should be raised with the Minister.

When the CRWMA is repealed, would nominations of potential dump sites, such as the one submitted by the Northern Land Council for Muckaty, need to be resubmitted to comply with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (ALRA) legislation?

Response: The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism is currently working on a radioactive waste management strategy and the Minister will make details available when it is completed and agreed within Government.

Is the Department intending to meet with the Northern Land Council to discuss Muckaty

- a) regarding previous arrangements with the Howard government
- b) in the context of the site(s) being considered for a dump under the Labor waste management process, including whether any previous nomination will be re-submitted

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Response: The Department expects to discuss site investigations at Muckaty Station with the Northern Land Council.

Federal Labor has committed to a new approach to radioactive waste management that is based on non-imposition, extensive community consultation and best practice science – can the Minister/Department detail how and when this new process will be advanced?

Response: The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism is currently working on a radioactive waste management strategy and the Minister will make details available when it is completed and agreed within Government.