

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio
Budget Senate Estimates
1 June 2010

Question: BR7
Topic: National In Situ Leach Uranium Mining Best Practice Guide
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Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM-Finally, I want to ask you briefly about the ISL best practice guide, which I have here: Australia's National In Situ Leach Uranium Mining Best Practice Guide. Can you just tell us when this was commissioned and how much it cost to produce.

Mr Clarke-I think that is a matter for the department rather than for Geoscience Australia.

Senator LUDLAM-Okay. Your name is on the front cover, so-

Mr Clarke-But it is for the department; we will respond to your question.

Senator LUDLAM-All right; that is fine. It looks like there are actually four agencies listed here; can you just quickly sketch for us what Geoscience's role was in the production of the report.

Dr Pigram-Sure. We would have provided the geoscience component of the report. We have people who are expert in uranium mining, and in situ leach mining in particular, and we provide advice to the department in relation to those practices, both within Australia and through monitoring what happens globally. So we would have provided to the department the geoscience component of that report.

Senator LUDLAM-So you were not actually the lead agency responsible for the publication of that report?

Dr Pigram-I think we were.

Senator LUDLAM-You were?

Mr Hartwell-But Geoscience Australia was the lead agency.

Senator LUDLAM-Then I guess that is probably appropriate. Has it been peer reviewed?

Mr Hartwell-The report was prepared in consultation with a wide range of interested stakeholders, including the industry and a number of people with research capacity in this area. It was coordinated by Geoscience Australia, but it had input from a very wide range of people who could bring expertise to the table.

Senator LUDLAM-I have run the clock down and I know there are other folk wanting to come to the table, so, on notice, could you provide for me the names of those independent experts and academics who you drew on, who you mentioned there?

Mr Hartwell-Sure.

Senator LUDLAM-That would be much appreciated.

Answer:

The independent experts consulted in the preparation of *Australia's in situ recovery uranium mining best practice guide*, were people who have experience in uranium mining and remediation and, in particular, in situ recovery uranium mining. They are set out below.

1. The Uranium Group, a joint initiative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Nuclear Energy Agency, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) brings together international experts and regulators with experience in uranium mine management and rehabilitation.

In particular, Mr Didier Louvat, Head of the Waste and Environmental Safety Section, IAEA and Mr Peter Waggitt, Nuclear Fuel Cycle and Material Section, IAEA and Uranium Mining Remediation Exchange Group, IAEA.

2. Officials from the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (US NRC). The US NRC approves and regulates uranium recovery facilities. It currently regulates four "in situ recovery" (ISR) operations and is reviewing applications for five new ISR operations.
3. State officials from jurisdictions with ISR operations, the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality.
4. The steering group for *Australia's in situ recovery uranium mining best practice guide* included officials from: the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism; the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts; the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency; state and territory resources; and environment and health authorities in jurisdictions that regulate uranium mining.
5. *Australia's in situ recovery uranium mining best practice guide* was circulated for comment to:
 - Dr Gavin Mudd, Monash University;
 - Key environmental groups including the Australian Conservation Foundation, the South Australian Conservation Council, the Northern Territory Environment Centre, the Conservation Council of Western Australia, and Friends of the Earth Australia;
 - Aboriginal representative groups including the Northern Land Council and the Central Land Council; and
 - Industry groups including the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, the Minerals Council of Australia, and the Australian Uranium Association.