

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 3

Output Group: 3.2 – Assistance for science collaboration and innovation.

DEST Question No. E136_06

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

At the 25 January 2005 press conference, the Minister said that *“it will be our determination to see that waste will be stored at that offshore site, but to ensure that we don’t fall behind the deadlines we will also be examining a Commonwealth-owned remote onshore site a fallback option...”*

What are the deadlines that the Minister refers to? Has a timeline for consultation on the possible sites been determined? Is there a timeline for selection of a site yet? Or a timeline for Cabinet consideration? Do you anticipate that it could take another 10 years to determine a site?

What are the reasons for the Minister moving away from offshore being the preferred option for a waste dump?

Answer:

Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Facility

On 15 July 2005 the Minister for Education, Science and Training announced that three sites in the Northern Territory had been identified for detailed consideration of their suitability as the site for the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Facility.

The Minister has stated that the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Facility will need to be available to accept residues arising from the overseas reprocessing of spent fuel. The earliest this waste could return is 2011.

A comprehensive analysis of Commonwealth offshore and onshore land took into account issues such as compatibility with current land use, safety of people and the environment, security of radioactive waste and operational considerations such as adequacy of transport infrastructure. As a consequence of this analysis, no offshore sites were considered sufficiently appropriate to warrant further on-site investigation.