

20 April 2020

Thanks to David Noonan for these notes summarising a significant submission by the regulator ARPANSA to the Senate Inquiry.

A Note so you may be aware of interesting matters raised in the ARPANSA submission to the Senate Inquiry:

Submission No.86 (7 pages) by the regulator Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (PDF 833 KB) has been posted on Senate Inquiry website:

<https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=41390f03-33ed-46be-bcb4-2913c6263b99&subId=680048>

The UK reprocessed nuclear waste shipment is planned in 2022 – with ANSTO Lucas Heights the “only feasible destination”:

See p.3-4 under Headings:

Commonwealth waste holdings - role of the NRWMF

ANSTO

The Interim Waste Store (IWS) Facility

*Additional ILW remains in the UK from reprocessing of HIFAR spent fuel, and is planned to be returned to Australia in 2022. Should the shipment take place at that time, the NRWMF will (again) not be available, **which in all likelihood leaves Lucas Heights as the preferred (by ANSTO) option, and possibly the only feasible destination.** ARPANSA is aware that the waste in this second shipment is likely to be immobilised and contained in a TN-81 cask with considerably less activity content than the first cask.*

ARPANSA expects an application from ANSTO for approval to make a change with significant implications for safety under section 63 of the Regulations¹⁰, supported by a revised safety analysis report and an updated safety case, well in advance of the time the second shipment is intended to be loaded on a vessel for shipment to Australia.

So at this stage the UK reprocessed nuclear waste shipment is planned to go into Sydney (presumably to go over Port Kembla).

Unless the UK gov agree to a delay & that’s assuming the NRWMF is progressing to receive shipments of nuclear waste at a port in SA.

Noting the French gov did not agree to a delay back in 2015.

Also, ARPANSA making clear they intend an Application from ANSTO "*well in advance of the time the second shipment is intended to be loaded on a vessel for shipment to Australia*" – ANSTO didn't do so in 2015.

So our side & and MUA (I've let them know) may get some useful notice and can engage on that shipment publicly and formally.

If this UK shipment does go into Sydney (like the French reprocessed nuclear waste did in 2015), presumably we / MUA can raise a strong case that it shouldn't later be moved a second time to 'temporary' (indefinite) above ground storage in SA, with a third move then required to a future disposal site...

And the federal gov case for an above ground interim (read indefinite) nuclear fuel waste store in SA is further significantly weakened.

Note - ARPANSA saying (p.4):

"ARPANSA has not raised safety concerns regarding storage of waste at the Interim Waste Store."

(Regarding the IWS at Lucas Heights which holds the French reprocessed waste and was designed to also take the UK waste and operate for 40+ years)

And acknowledging ANSTO has identified two "contingency measures in short to medium term" - including what we are asking for:

- ***"Retention of the returned residues at ANSTO until the availability of a final disposal option"***

(The other contingency measure is the ANSTO / Department / Minister's plan for:

- *Retention of the returned residues at ANSTO until the availability of the NRWMF for storage)*

ARPANSA usefully counter some of the propaganda going around pro-dump circles on claimed 'need' to move key nuclear wastes:

"ARPANSA is aware that some stakeholders have interpreted ARPANSA's decisions regarding the IWS as a requirement for relocation of the waste stored in the IWS, even suggesting that there is an urgent need for relocation. This is not correct. ARPANSA has not raised safety concerns regarding storage of waste at the

IWS."

On Transport:

ARPANSA flag a potential requirement (p.7) for "**prior approval of a transport safety and/or security plan by ARPANSA**" in a Safety Case before Site Licensing,

So we'd get an opportunity to publicly and formally contest these issues in consultation with the regulator, to show they are not 'resolved', before any licensing could happen.

Requiring community engagement / consultation on a 'transport safety and/or security plan' prior to Site licensing should become a specific ask of our side...

"The safety case should acknowledge the existence of any unresolved issues and should provide information on work proposed to resolve these issues in future stages of the licensing process. Issues that have been resolved with ARPANSA and other stakeholders should be documented and form part of the safety case.

The safety of transport to, from and between radioactive waste management facilities should also be considered noting that the responsibility for transport of waste to a storage or disposal facility lies with the waste owner. This may require prior approval of a transport safety and/or security plan by ARPANSA."

Note - To add to our call for the Senate Inquiry to be held over until Public Hearings can be held in Adelaide, Whyalla and Kimba:

For the Inquiry timeline to be extended to receive evidence of two ANSTO nuclear waste management reports that are due to ARPANSA by 30th June.

And for the Inquiry and community to be able to hear and consider the ARPANSA response and evaluation of ANSTO's proposed Intermediate Level Waste plans.

- see p.4 on these two reports in the first two para's at header:
Implications of ILW generation and storage at Lucas Heights for the NRWMF

Also **Note the fundamental point made well in the two-page ACF Briefing Note** April 2010 to the Senate Inquiry

(attached to ACF submission No.97):

"Advancing responsible radioactive waste management in Australia"

<https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=efb5c09a-d4eb-45cf-82e3-683fa4ef5b12&subId=680115>

"There is no regulatory or radiological impediment to extended interim storage at Lucas Heights. ANSTO's facility is prohibited from becoming a permanent disposal site, **however there are no comparable constraints on it as a site for extended storage.** Importantly, this approach also provides the ability to have an evidence based and open review of the best long-term management options."

ANSTO's own submission is seriously misleading in reading as though Lucas Heights can't continue to store for decades the nuclear fuel wastes / Intermediate Level Wastes – just because it can't be a permanent disposal site.

We have called for *Extended Storage* at Lucas Heights at least until scientifically defensible and publicly acceptable nuclear waste disposal plans may arise – which is one of the two accepted contingencies by the regulator ARPANSA & put forward by ANSTO.

The Committee are still posting submissions received, the Secretary summarises them for Members of Inquiry, and Members usually then decide on whom to call as Witnesses. The Inquiry may shortly hold a 'tele-conference' hearing in Canberra with Agencies (ANSTO, Department and ARPANSA) as way of getting started...