

QB24-000035

AUSTRALIAN SPACE INDUSTRY

Gilmour Space Launch Permit

- Protecting people and property, as well as our natural environment, is critical to the long-term sustainability of the space sector – it builds social license with the community and demonstrates success to our international partners.
- Ensuring the safety of space launches from Australia and encouraging entrepreneurialism is not an either-or proposition. It is the core purpose of the *Space (Launches and Returns) Act 2018*.
- The Australian Space Agency's Office of the Space Regulator must be satisfied that all requirements under the *Space (Launches and Returns) Act 2018* are met before making a recommendation to me, as the decision maker, to authorise a space launch.
- The Office of the Space Regulator continues to work closely with Gilmour Space on the application process for the Eris TestFlight 1. A decision on the matter is expected to be made in due course.

Technology Safeguards Agreement (TSA)

- The treaty-level agreement entered into force on 23 July 2024 following exchange of diplomatic notes between the US and Australian Governments.
- The TSA is a US requirement for the launch and return of US space technology (rockets and satellites) in countries outside of the US, focused on the protection of US space technology.
- Australia has negotiated an agreement that strikes a balance between protecting sensitive US technology while unlocking new commercial opportunities for Australian companies to benefit from US spaceflight.

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- The US holds the largest share of the global launch and satellite market. With the TSA in place, it's estimated Australian spaceport operators could supply up to 100 space launches over the next decade with a benefit to the Australian economy of \$1 billion.

If asked, about specific spaceflight opportunities such as SpaceX Starship.

- With the TSA now in place US space companies can now launch and return spacecraft in Australia.
- The Australian Space Agency is currently engaging with domestic and international companies looking to explore spaceflight opportunities in Australia. It does not comment on specific opportunities.
- All commercial spaceflight activities in Australia, including those under the TSA, require a relevant Australian permit or licence.

Space Programs

- The Australian Government's Moon to Mars and International Space Investment Initiative grant programs enable Australian companies to enter global space supply chains and enhance our linkages with international partners, while supporting the continued growth of the Australian space sector.
- Outcomes of the Moon to Mars Supply Chain rounds 8, 9 and 10 were announced on 1 March 2024, funding 12 new projects to a total of \$9.015 million. Supply Chain Round 11 closed on 16 July. My department is evaluating the applications.
- Outcomes of the International Space Investment India Initiative were announced on 30 April 2024, funding three collaborative space projects between Australia and India to a total of \$18 million, addressing shared challenges like climate change.

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- Moon to Mars Trailblazer (lunar rover) Stage 2 is currently open for the two stage 1 consortiums to apply and closes on 12 August.

SpaceX Fram 2 Mission

- The inclusion of Australian Eric Philips OAM, an Antarctic explorer, on this future SpaceX commercial spaceflight mission will provide an opportunity to excite Australians about space.
- Mr Philips would be only the fourth Australian to go to space.
 - Paul Scully Power and Andy Thomas flew for NASA.
 - Chris Boshuizen flew suborbital as a space tourist with Blue Origin in 2021.
- This mission is being privately funded, and Mr Philips is not representing Australia in an official capacity. Mr Phillips does not hold basic astronaut training qualification.
- The mission will include 4 people and launch no earlier than late 2024, and it will be the first to explore Earth's polar regions. The vehicle will remain in orbit for 3 to 5 days.
- Commercial spaceflight opportunities are distinct from government astronaut missions to places like the International Space Station (ISS) or the Moon, which include extensive national science and research missions.
- Government astronaut missions involve large teams from their nations, bringing along the whole ecosystem and beyond. They fly with:
 - A suite of science and experiments for their country
 - An associated educational program, and
 - Enhanced international relationships, economic growth opportunities and supply chain access that is enabled through barter arrangements.

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DIVERSITY IN STEM

Issue

What is the Government doing to boost diversity in STEM fields?

Key Talking Points

- The Government is committed to boosting diversity and increasing the participation of underrepresented groups, including women, in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) jobs in Australia.
- A diverse and inclusive STEM sector is critical to meet the future demand for STEM skilled employees in our emerging industries like renewable energy, critical minerals, and quantum technology, and to support a future made in Australia.
- That is why, as part of the 2024-25 Budget, the Government has invested \$38.2 million over 8 years (plus \$1.3 million per year ongoing) to support a thriving, skilled and diverse STEM workforce. This includes providing more funding to existing programs that are working well.
- A diverse STEM workforce will maximise the impact of major government investments, like the \$22.7 billion Future Made in Australia package, the \$15 billion National Reconstruction Fund and the \$392 million Industry Growth Program. The Government is making sure the organisations we fund through these, and other programs, are attracting and retaining diverse employees.
- These actions are in response to the recommendations of the independent Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review (Review) released in February 2024. The full response will be released in due course.
- The Review highlights that more effort is required to remove the cultural and systemic barriers preventing people from all backgrounds entering and continuing in STEM education and careers and called for targeted changes.

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Background

The following existing programs have been enhanced with additional funding or other changes (total of \$115.1 million from 2016-17 to 2031-32, including additional funding). While the Government has announced the total funding package, the Government is yet to announce the funding breakdown.

- The **Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship Grants (WISE)** (\$47.5million from 2016-17 (ongoing)) is a competitive grants program that funds community-driven projects to eliminate barriers to women's participation along the STEM pathway. **It will receive an additional \$8.5 million for round 5 from 2025-26** to support longer-term projects that will better target systemic and cultural barriers.
- The **Diversity in STEM Toolkit** (\$3.8 million from 2018-19 to 2029-30), is an expansion of the Girls in STEM Toolkit, which was due to end 2023-24. **It will be extended and receive an additional \$2 million over 5 years** to inspire more young people from diverse cohorts to engage in STEM learning. This program is delivered by Education Services Australia.
- The **STEM Equity Monitor** (\$3.63 million from 2018-19 to 2029-30), which brings together data to understand the state of gender equity in STEM, **will receive an additional \$0.7 million** to improve understanding of progress to increase participation of women and other underrepresented cohorts and the impact of the government's investment.
- **Superstars of STEM** (\$7.06 million from 2017-18 to 2031-32) **will receive an additional \$3.8 million over 7 years** to expand its work to increase the professional media and leadership capability of women, non-binary and diverse people in STEM. This will boost their careers whilst increasing the visibility of diverse role models, to break stereotypes

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and inspire the next generation. This program is delivered by Science & Technology Australia.

- An updated **Australian Diversity in Science Accreditation Framework** (\$10.93 million from 2016-17 to 2029-30) **will receive an additional \$7.1 million over 5 years** to provide accreditation and professional support services to help more higher education and research workplaces be safe and inclusive. This expands upon Science in Australia Gender Equity.
- **Elevate: Boosting Diversity in STEM** (\$42.4 million from 2021-22 to 2031-32) (formerly known as Elevate: Boosting Women in STEM) will be changed to deliver a more flexible higher-education scholarship program that supports women and gender-diverse people balance study with caring responsibilities, health, and other needs. This program is delivered by the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences & Engineering.

Science engagement programs

- The **National Youth Science Forum** (\$3.9 million from 2016-17 to 2029-30) **will receive an additional \$1.8 million over 4 years** from 2024-25 to make the program more accessible nationally and to encourage young people from diverse backgrounds, especially regional and rural, to pursue STEM.
- The **Prime Minister's Prizes for Science** (\$26 million from 2016-17 to 2037-38) **will receive an additional \$9.5 million over 15 years** to boost the value of the science teaching prizes to be commensurate with the other Prime Minister's Prizes for Science and Innovation, recognising the importance of teachers in inspiring our next generation of STEM professionals.

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- The Review highlights that more effort is required to remove the cultural and systemic barriers preventing people from all backgrounds entering and continuing in STEM education and careers and called for targeted changes.

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Background

The following existing programs have been enhanced with additional funding or other changes. This funding was announced on 19 August 2024:

- The **Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship Grants (WISE)** (*\$47.5million from 2016-17 (ongoing)*) is a competitive grants program that funds community-driven projects to eliminate barriers to women's participation along the STEM pathway. **It will receive an additional \$8.5 million for round 5 from 2025-26** to support longer-term projects that will better target systemic and cultural barriers.
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- **Superstars of STEM** (*\$7.0 million from 2017-18 to 2030-31*) **will receive an additional \$3.8 million over 7 years** to expand its work to increase the professional media and leadership capability of women, non-binary and diverse people in STEM. This will boost their careers whilst increasing the visibility of diverse role models, to break stereotypes and inspire the next generation. This program is delivered by Science & Technology Australia.
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Changes to two additional programs were published on the Department's website on 20 August:

- DISR will receive **an additional \$0.7 million** to broaden the scope of the **STEM Equity Monitor** (*\$3.39 million from 2018-19 to 2029-30*), which brings together data to understand the state of gender equity in STEM and the impact of the government's investment.
- **Elevate: Boosting Diversity in STEM** (*\$42.4 million from 2021-22 to 2031-32*) (formerly known as Elevate: Boosting Women in STEM) will be changed to deliver a more flexible higher-education scholarship program that supports women and gender-diverse people balance study with caring responsibilities, health, and other needs. This program is delivered by the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences & Engineering.

The following funding has not yet been announced:

- The Prime Minister's Prizes for Science (*\$26 million from 2016-17 to 2037-38*) **will receive an additional \$9.5 million over 15 years** to boost the value of the science teaching prizes to be commensurate with the other Prime Minister's Prizes for Science and Innovation, recognising the importance of teachers in inspiring our next generation of STEM professionals. This will be announced at a later date.

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CSIRO**CSIRO Job Cuts**

- I am aware of the media coverage regarding changes in CSIRO's staffing arrangements. The CSIRO Staff Association has also written to me on the matter.
- CSIRO is a corporate Commonwealth entity and staffing arrangements are a matter for the CSIRO Board and management.
- CSIRO has assured me they are taking steps to ensure staff are appropriately informed, consulted and strongly supported through these change processes, with the wellbeing of staff remaining a top priority.
- Australia needs a strong, vibrant, and financially sustainable national science agency that maximises research investment to deliver the best possible impact to the nation.
- Since 2022-23, the Government has invested an estimated \$26.8 billion in research, science and innovation. This includes:
 - \$39.9 million to support safe and responsible adoption of artificial intelligence
 - \$466.4 million for delivering quantum computing capability through PsiQuantum
 - \$38.2 million for diversity in STEM measures.

How is CSIRO's research assisting Australia to achieve our national priorities?

- As Australia's national science agency, CSIRO's research can help to support a Future Made in Australia.
- CSIRO collaborates with industry and SMEs to translate research into commercial outcomes, supporting a productive and innovative economy.

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This work will help build Australian industry capacity and align with the National Reconstruction Fund priorities.

- CSIRO’s Innovate to Grow program works with SMEs and start-ups in the digital health and medical technology sectors – this directly aligns with the NRF Medical science priority.
- CSIRO is helping Australia become a renewable energy superpower and to achieve net zero. CSIRO is working with global research partners to provide solutions in the area of energy storage, transmission and network resilience.
 - Through its Smart Energy Mission, CSIRO will work to develop the next generation of integrated energy systems to support Australia’s energy transformation.
- CSIRO scientists have a history of supporting the health of Australia and protecting against threats to biosecurity and human health.
 - Research from CSIRO’s Catalysing Australia’s Biosecurity Mission, will continue to support the health and prosperity of our nation by protecting our environment and primary industries from biosecurity threats, and supporting innovation and evolution of our biosecurity system.
- I expect CSIRO will continue to prioritise solutions that benefit all Australians. I will work with CSIRO to help put our refreshed National Science and Research Priorities into practice and to support the Government’s continued commitment to promote Diversity in STEM.

GenCost report

- The final 2023-24 GenCost report was released by CSIRO and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) on 22 May 2024.

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- The report's analysis is that renewable energy, backed by storage and transmission, remains the lowest cost new-build electricity technology.
- The report's analysis also indicates that nuclear power is higher cost than renewables, with large-scale nuclear requiring at least 15 years to develop due to the absence of a nuclear power pipeline in Australia and the added safety regulation required.
- I am aware of remarks regarding CSIRO and AEMO's GenCost consultation report earlier this year.
- I am also aware of CSIRO Chief Executive Doug Hilton's open letter in March 2024 defending this report and our national science agency.
- For the last 100 years, CSIRO's work has helped Australia to meet significant challenges and seize new opportunities to solve difficult issues.
- CSIRO is trusted by the community, industry and government to be independent in its analysis and to provide scientific information, innovation and engagement for the benefit of the nation.
- To quote Dr Hilton's letter: "Maintaining trust requires scientists to act with integrity. Maintaining trust also requires our political leaders to resist the temptation to disparage science."

Response to Avian Influenza in Australia

- I am aware of the current outbreak of Avian Influenza across NSW, Victoria and ACT.
- The CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, as the national reference laboratory, is playing a key role in testing and characterising the virus, which helps industry and decision makers respond to the outbreak.
- As Australia's highest biocontainment facility, states and territory laboratories rely on the ACDP to undertake testing on these samples.

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Background

CSIRO job cuts

- CSIRO have confirmed a refocusing of the Human Health program that will see 39 staff with ceased term contracts, redeployed, or made redundant.
- CSIRO are considering changes to research units to align scientific capability with national priorities.
 - Data61 is examining its budget position for sustainable research, with no decisions yet made.
 - S 47E(c)
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- Costs of the Enterprise Services (non-research part of the organisation) will be reduced by 25 per cent by July 2025, but number of staff this will impact has not been determined. CSIRO has completed the first and second phase of this work, which included a restructuring of Enterprise Services. The third phase will commence shortly.

GenCost 2023-24

- GenCost is an annual collaboration between CSIRO and AEMO that examines the cost of building future electricity generation in Australia.
- The final GenCost report was released on 22 May. It found:
 - renewables, backed by storage and transmission, remains the lowest cost new build electricity technology.

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- nuclear power remains higher cost than renewables, with large-scale nuclear requiring at least 15 years to develop due to the absence of a nuclear power pipeline in Australia and the additional regulatory steps required.
- capital costs have changed significantly for several technologies, including an 8 per cent decrease in the cost of large-scale solar photovoltaic compared to a year ago.

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CSIRO

Issue

How does CSIRO support Australia?

Key Talking Points

CSIRO Job cuts

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- CSIRO is a corporate Commonwealth entity and staffing arrangements are a matter for the CSIRO Board and management.
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CSIRO's research helps achieve national priorities.

- As Australia's national science agency, CSIRO's research can help to support a Future Made in Australia.
- CSIRO collaborates with industry and SMEs to translate research into commercial outcomes, supporting a productive and innovative economy. This work will help build Australian industry capacity and align with the National Reconstruction Fund priorities.
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- I expect CSIRO will continue to prioritise solutions that benefit all Australians. I will work with CSIRO to help put our refreshed National Science and Research Priorities into practice and to support the Government's continued commitment to promote Diversity in STEM.

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Rigorous analysis of energy systems

What is the value of CSIRO's GenCost report to Australia?

- The final 2023-24 GenCost report was released by CSIRO and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) on 22 May 2024.
- The report's analysis is that renewable energy, backed by storage and transmission, remains the lowest cost new-build electricity technology.
- The report's analysis also indicates that nuclear power is higher cost than renewables, with large-scale nuclear requiring at least 15 years to develop due to the absence of a nuclear power pipeline in Australia and the added safety regulation required.
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Helping to protect and respond to disease outbreaks

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- As Australia's highest biocontainment facility, states and territory laboratories rely on the ACDP to undertake testing on these samples.

Background

CSIRO job cuts

- Staff consultation on potential changes to CSIRO staffing – across Enterprise Services ('corporate' functions) and some research business units (S 47E(c)) – is underway. While the impact on positions is not yet quantified, some reductions are expected.
- The CSIRO Staff Association released an open letter to Minister Husic on 5 August 2024, seeking his support and immediate intervention to save the CSIRO.

GenCost 2023-24

- GenCost is an annual collaboration between CSIRO and AEMO that examines the cost of building future electricity generation in Australia.
- The final GenCost report was released on 22 May. It found:
 - renewables, backed by storage and transmission, remains the lowest cost new build electricity technology.
 - nuclear power remains higher cost than renewables, with large-scale nuclear requiring at least 15 years to develop due to the absence of a nuclear power pipeline in Australia and the additional regulatory steps required.

Contact: S 22, Manager, Science Agencies, S 22
Cleared by: Natalie Weddell, General Manager Science Policy and Governance,
S 22

Min ID: QB24-000046
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- capital costs have changed significantly for several technologies, including an 8 per cent decrease in the cost of large-scale solar photovoltaic compared to a year ago.

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QB24-000049

ANSTO**Issue – media article about ANSTO and Icon SI**

- I am aware of media reports about a legal dispute between ANSTO and the contractor, Icon SI (Aust) Pty Ltd.
- Icon SI was awarded the contract for construction of the new Synroc Waste Treatment Plant at Lucas Heights which will treat radioactive waste associated with nuclear medicine.
- This new plant is not yet operational and there is no risk to public safety arising from the matters reported in the media.
- This matter is the subject of ongoing legal dispute with the potential of arbitration proceedings.
- As such I can not comment on it further.

Issue – ongoing management of nuclear waste following Kimba decision

- ANSTO is the custodian of Australia's nuclear capabilities and expertise, and so manages some of the nation's most significant scientific infrastructure. Every year, thousands of scientists from industry and academia access ANSTO's state-of-the-art facilities.
- In delivering its mandate, ANSTO generates small amounts of radioactive waste when compared to international counterparts.
 - This waste is managed safely in purpose-built temporary storage facilities at ANSTO's main campus in Lucas Heights.
 - ANSTO is legally able to hold nuclear waste on a temporary basis.

Contact: S 22, Manager, ANSTO Policy and Governance Section, 02
S 22
Cleared by: Natalie Weddell, General Manager, Science Policy and Governance, 02
S 22

Min ID: QB24-000049
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- The Government is now considering longer-term options for how best to address existing and future Commonwealth radioactive waste held across the country.
- The Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources, has policy responsibility for radioactive waste management.
 - On 10 August 2023, Minister King announced the government will not pursue Napandee, Lyndhurst or Wallerberdina as potential sites for the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF).
 - The Minister confirmed the department has begun work on alternative proposals for the storage and disposal of the Commonwealth's civilian low-level and intermediate-level radioactive waste.
 - The Lucas Heights community is an important stakeholder.
 - The Government recognises, and does not take for granted, the strong support of the local community for ANSTO and its important activities, which greatly benefit Australian science, health, and industry.
- The Government will work with communities to identify how to collectively benefit from nuclear science, research, and medicines and at the same time responsibly manage resulting waste.
- Questions on the NRWMF are a matter for Minister King.

QB24-000049

Background

Legal dispute between ANSTO and Icon SI?

- On 12 May 2024 a Sunday Telegraph media article, 'Defects in nuke plant', revealed an ongoing legal dispute between ANSTO and the contractor, Icon SI (Aust). See **Attachment A**.
- On 28 May 2018, Icon SI (Aust) was awarded the contract for construction of the new Synroc radioactive waste treatment plant at Lucas Heights.
- During the cold commissioning phase, a defect was detected, the plant has been returned to fit out phase and ANSTO is rectifying the defect. There is no risk to employee or public safety from the defect, which will be rectified prior to operations commencing.
- The defect involves the failure of the proxy lining material of the hot cells.
- The facility does not currently store, nor has had any radioactive waste products introduced into it.
- This matter is the subject of ongoing legal dispute with the potential of arbitration proceedings.

National Radioactive Waste Management

- On 18 July 2023, the Federal Court of Australia set aside a declaration made on 26 November 2021 by the Hon Keith Pitt MP, then Minister for Resources and Water under subsection 14(2) of the *National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012* (NRWM Act).
 - This Court decision followed judicial review of Minister Pitt's declaration that ~210 hectares of a property known as Napandee (near Kimba, in South Australia) would be the site for the NRWMF.
 - The application for judicial review was made by parties including the Barngarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation.

Contact: **S 22** A/Manager, ANSTO Policy and Governance Section, **S 22**
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Min ID: QB24-000049
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- The Court upheld one of the review grounds, in respect of apprehended bias.
 - All other grounds (both under constitutional law and by way of judicial review) were rejected.
- There has been significant media reporting about the decision.
- On 10 August 2023, Minister King in her Statement to Parliament noted:
 - The Government would not appeal the Federal Court finding of apprehended bias regarding the NRWMF site selection.
 - Government would not pursue Napandee, Lyndhurst or Wallerberdina sites as a potential site for the NRWMF.
 - The vast majority of Australia's radioactive waste is from nuclear medicine.
 - Waste can be safely stored at Lucas Heights for some time, but government must ensure this waste has an appropriate disposal pathway.
 - The department has begun work on alternative proposals for storage and disposal of the Commonwealth's civilian low-level and intermediate-level radioactive waste.
- Consistent with the organisation's purview, ANSTO holds the most low and intermediate level nuclear waste as reported in [Australia's National Inventory of Radioactive Waste 2021](#).
- ANSTO is legally able to store nuclear waste temporarily.

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- ANSTO functions allow for the conditioning, management and storage of radioactive materials and radioactive waste under particular conditions, but it is not to be a national nuclear waste repository per subsections 5(1A) and 5(1B) of the [*Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation Act 1987*](#).

Contact: S 22 , A/Manager, ANSTO Policy and Governance Section, CS
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Min ID: QB24-000049
Division: Science
Created: 22 January 2024
Updated: S 22

QB24-000049

Attachment A:

Sunday Telegraph media article, 'Defects in nuke plant' 12 May 2024

'Defects' in nuke plant

Court case reveals lining of radioactive cells at new Lucas Heights plant is faulty

EXCLUSIVE
Linda Silmalis

The lining within the "hot cells" of the new radioactive waste treatment plant at Lucas Heights has literally been peeling off, with secret details about the defect in the ANSTO-designed facility unveiled during a legal dispute.

The construction of the \$27 million plant has been at the centre of a protracted legal battle between ANSTO and the contractor, with each blaming the other for the bungle.

The plant – which will become operation in the late 2020s – has been built to treat waste from the production of a special radioisotope called Mo-99 to be used in medicine.

Contractors were invited in 2017 to build the plant with ANSTO and Icon SI (Aust) – comprising Cockram Con-

struction – awarded a contract for \$27 million for the construction of the building.

However, Icon SI has since taken ANSTO to court with the two parties in dispute over the works, including the withholding of payments and who is responsible for the so-called "epoxy defect".

A technology and construction list statement filed in the NSW Supreme Court late last year by lawyers for Icon IS revealed how ANSTO had noted a "subsisting defect in the epoxy coating".

However, Icon SI's lawyers claimed it was ANSTO which had caused the problem – now rectified – as it was its design.

"The defendant's design at the junctions of steel and concrete failed to take into account the different thermal expansion of the two materials," the statement said.

"The different thermal ex-

pansion of the two materials causes the epoxy coating at the junctions to crack."

An Icon spokeswoman said the choice of lining within the hot cells had been found to be inadequate, resulting in the delamination and "peeling".

While ANSTO was trying to "blame the builder", it had only engaged Cockram under a "construct-only" contract, she said. She also claimed Cockram had been engaged before ANSTO had completed the design, drawings and broader contract documentation for the project.

"ANSTO has consistently tried to blame what are in fact design defects on the builder," she said.

"One such issue is the lining chosen inside of the hot cell, which contains the nuclear waste. This specification has been found to be inadequate, resulting in delamination/peel-

ing. The design of the hot cell remains unsuitable for its intended purpose."

The Sunday Telegraph has been told the epoxy coating was applied to the internal floors and walls in the facility, and to the front and back of the hot cells.

The hot cells have yet to receive nuclear waste – which occurs during the "hot

commissioning" phase – with the defect detected as it was undergoing cold commissioning. The plant has now been returned to "fit out" stage with defect being rectified by ANSTO.

An ANSTO spokeswoman said it was inappropriate to comment on the matter given the ongoing legal proceedings.

NSW Supreme Court Justice Michael Ball last month sent the matter to arbitration.

Contact: S 22 A/Manager, ANSTO Policy and Governance Section, 02 S

Cleared by: Natalie Weddell, General Manager, Science Policy and Governance, 02 S 22

Min ID: QB24-000049

Division: Science

Created: 22 January 2024

Updated: S 22

QB24-000049

ANSTO**Issue – How is ANSTO managing its nuclear waste**

- ANSTO is the custodian of Australia's nuclear capabilities and expertise, and so manages some of the nation's most significant scientific infrastructure. Every year, thousands of scientists from industry and academia access ANSTO's state-of-the-art facilities.
- In delivering its mandate, ANSTO generates small amounts of low and intermediate level radioactive waste when compared to international counterparts.
 - This waste is managed safely in purpose-built temporary storage facilities at ANSTO's main campus in Lucas Heights.
 - ANSTO is legally able to hold nuclear waste on a temporary basis.
 - ANSTO has advised that they have capacity at the Lucas Heights campus to store radioactive waste until the mid-2030s.
 - Construction of additional storage facilities is expected to extend safe storage capacity to 2040.
- The Government is now considering longer-term options for how best to address existing and future Commonwealth radioactive waste held across the country.
- The Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources, has policy responsibility for radioactive waste management.
 - On 10 August 2023, Minister King announced the government will not pursue Napandee, Lyndhurst or Wallerberdina as potential sites for the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF).

Contact: S 22, Manager, ANSTO Policy and Governance Section, 02
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Cleared by: Natalie Weddell, General Manager, Science Policy and Governance, 02
S 22

Min ID: QB24-000049
Division: Science
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QB24-000049

- The Minister confirmed the department has begun work on alternative proposals for the storage and disposal of the Commonwealth's civilian low-level and intermediate-level radioactive waste.
- The Lucas Heights community is an important stakeholder.
- The Government recognises, and does not take for granted, the strong support of the local community for ANSTO and its important activities, which greatly benefit Australian science, health, and industry.
- The Government will work with communities to identify how to collectively benefit from nuclear science, research, and medicines and at the same time responsibly manage resulting waste.
- Questions on the NRWMF are a matter for Minister King.

Contact: S 22 A/Manager, ANSTO Policy and Governance Section, S 22
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S 22

Min ID: QB24-000049
Division: Science
Created: 22 January 2024
Updated: S 22

QB24-000049

Background

National Radioactive Waste Management

- On 18 July 2023, the Federal Court of Australia set aside a declaration made on 26 November 2021 by the Hon Keith Pitt MP, then Minister for Resources and Water under subsection 14(2) of the *National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012* (NRWM Act).
 - This Court decision followed judicial review of Minister Pitt's declaration that ~210 hectares of a property known as Napandee (near Kimba, in South Australia) would be the site for the NRWMF.
 - The application for judicial review was made by parties including the Barngarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation.
- The Court upheld one of the review grounds, in respect of apprehended bias.
 - All other grounds (both under constitutional law and by way of judicial review) were rejected.
- There has been significant media reporting about the decision.
- On 10 August 2023, Minister King in her Statement to Parliament noted:
 - The Government would not appeal the Federal Court finding of apprehended bias regarding the NRWMF site selection.
 - Government would not pursue Napandee, Lyndhurst or Wallerberdina sites as a potential site for the NRWMF.
 - The vast majority of Australia's radioactive waste is from nuclear medicine.
 - Waste can be safely stored at Lucas Heights for some time, but government must ensure this waste has an appropriate disposal pathway.

Contact: S 22 , A/Manager, ANSTO Policy and Governance Section, CS
Cleared by: Natalie Weddell, General Manager, Science Policy and Governance, 02
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Min ID: QB24-000049
Division: Science
Created: 22 January 2024
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- The department has begun work on alternative proposals for storage and disposal of the Commonwealth's civilian low-level and intermediate-level radioactive waste.
- Consistent with the organisation's purview, ANSTO holds the most low and intermediate level nuclear waste as reported in [Australia's National Inventory of Radioactive Waste 2021](#).
- ANSTO is legally able to store nuclear waste temporarily.
 - ANSTO functions allow for the conditioning, management and storage of radioactive materials and radioactive waste under particular conditions, but it is not to be a national nuclear waste repository per subsections 5(1A) and 5(1B) of the [Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation Act 1987](#).

Contact: S 22 A/Manager, ANSTO Policy and Governance Section, S 22
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Min ID: QB24-000049
Division: Science
Created: 22 January 2024
Updated: S 22

QB24-000049

Attachment A:

Sunday Telegraph media article, 'Defects in nuke plant' 12 May 2024

'Defects' in nuke plant

Court case reveals lining of radioactive cells at new Lucas Heights plant is faulty

EXCLUSIVE
Linda Silmalis

The lining within the "hot cells" of the new radioactive waste treatment plant at Lucas Heights has literally been peeling off, with secret details about the defect in the ANSTO-designed facility unveiled during a legal dispute.

The construction of the \$27 million plant has been at the centre of a protracted legal battle between ANSTO and the contractor, with each blaming the other for the bungle.

The plant – which will become operation in the late 2020s – has been built to treat waste from the production of a special radioisotope called Mo-99 to be used in medicine.

Contractors were invited in 2017 to build the plant with ANSTO and Icon SI (Aust) – comprising Cockram Con-

struction – awarded a contract for \$27 million for the construction of the building.

However, Icon SI has since taken ANSTO to court with the two parties in dispute over the works, including the withholding of payments and who is responsible for the so-called "epoxy defect".

A technology and construction list statement filed in the NSW Supreme Court late last year by lawyers for Icon IS revealed how ANSTO had noted a "subsisting defect in the epoxy coating".

However, Icon SI's lawyers claimed it was ANSTO which had caused the problem – now rectified – as it was its design.

"The defendant's design at the junctions of steel and concrete failed to take into account the different thermal expansion of the two materials," the statement said.

"The different thermal ex-

pansion of the two materials causes the epoxy coating at the junctions to crack."

An Icon spokeswoman said the choice of lining within the hot cells had been found to be inadequate, resulting in the delamination and "peeling".

While ANSTO was trying to "blame the builder", it had only engaged Cockram under a "construct-only" contract, she said. She also claimed Cockram had been engaged before ANSTO had completed the design, drawings and broader contract documentation for the project.

"ANSTO has consistently tried to blame what are in fact design defects on the builder," she said.

"One such issue is the lining chosen inside of the hot cell, which contains the nuclear waste. This specification has been found to be inadequate, resulting in delamination/peel-

ing. The design of the hot cell remains unsuitable for its intended purpose."

The Sunday Telegraph has been told the epoxy coating was applied to the internal floors and walls in the facility, and to the front and back of the hot cells.

The hot cells have yet to receive nuclear waste – which occurs during the "hot

commissioning" phase – with the defect detected as it was undergoing cold commissioning. The plant has now been returned to "fit out" stage with defect being rectified by ANSTO.

An ANSTO spokeswoman said it was inappropriate to comment on the matter given the ongoing legal proceedings.

NSW Supreme Court Justice Michael Ball last month sent the matter to arbitration.

Contact: S 22 , A/Manager, ANSTO Policy and Governance Section, C S
9
Cleared by: Natalie Weddell, General Manager, Science Policy and Governance, 02 S 22

Min ID: QB24-000049
Division: Science
Created: 22 January 2024
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QB24-000090

ROBOTICS AND AUTOMATION

Issue

What is the government doing to support robotics and automation in Australia?

Key Talking Points

- Robotics and Automation in Australia is predicted to increase annual productivity growth by 50 to 150 percent and add an additional \$170-600 billion per annum to GDP by 2030 (McKinsey, 2019).
 - The use of robotics and automation can help to revitalise our industrial base, combat workforce shortages in priority sectors like health and aged care, agriculture and emergency response, and encourage productivity growth and scalability while keeping our workers safe in sectors like manufacturing and resources.
- To capture this opportunity, the National Robotics Strategy (the strategy) was released on 28 May 2024. It sets a vision to develop and adopt our own robotics solutions to secure Australia's future and seize the opportunity. It highlights that the development and deployment of these technologies is supporting more rewarding, safe and dynamic jobs across our economy.
- The strategy builds on our strengths and expertise in robotics, outlining how robotics and automation can work for us, and how we can develop the right skills to build a Future Made in Australia.

Background

- The strategy has been informed by extensive stakeholder consultation and guided by the National Robotics Advisory Committee.

Contact: S 22, a/g Manager Robotics & Automation, S 22
Cleared by: Dan Quinn, General Manager Technology and Digital Division, S 22

Min ID: QB24-000090
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- The strategy sets a national direction for our robotics ecosystem to responsibly develop and use robotics and automation around four core themes:
 - National capability: Australia has a strong, collaborative robotics and automation ecosystem that is recognised for its strengths, has a thriving domestic market and exports globally.
 - Increasing adoption: Australian industries are supported to integrate robotics and automation technologies into their operations in ways that benefit Australian workers and communities.
 - Trust, inclusion and responsible development and use: Robotics and automation technologies designed and adopted in Australia are safe to use alongside Australian workers and are secure and inclusive by design.
 - Skills and diversity: Australians from all backgrounds contribute to and benefit from the development and adoption of robotics and automation.

If asked about supporting government initiatives

- The strategy is supported by a suite of flagship government policies, including:
 - The National Reconstruction Fund, which makes targeted investments to help Australia capture new, high-value market opportunities to diversify our industries and strengthen our economy. This includes investing \$1 billion into enabling capabilities such as robotics.
 - The Industry Growth Program, which supports innovative small and medium-sized organisations, inclusive of robotics and automation businesses, by providing commercialisation and growth advice.
 - This includes partnering with the Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing Hub as an Industry Partner Organisation to provide

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specialised advanced manufacturing advisory services, including on robotics and automation, to start-ups and SMEs.

- The Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator, which will drive development and acquisition pathways for Australian robotics and autonomy researchers and industry.

If asked about the delay in the release of the strategy

- As Australia's first National Robotics Strategy, it has been important to take the time needed to consult widely and ensure the community's views have been reflected.
- We have continued to support robotics and automation through a range of programs while the strategy was finalised. Related programs and initiatives include over 40 robotics related Commonwealth initiatives. This includes leveraging flagship initiatives such as the National Reconstruction Fund, Industry Growth Program, Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator and Future Made in Australia Agenda.

If asked about robotics and jobs

- Adopting robotics and automation is about supporting workers, not replacing them. Countries investing in robotics and automation have higher manufacturing outputs alongside increased employment, growth, and job satisfaction. That's because robotics and automation can take care of the dirty, dull and dangerous activities, leaving skilled workers to focus the tasks where they can add the most value.
- Research has shown countries that have invested in robotics and automation experience higher manufacturing outputs and levels of employment, growth and job satisfaction.
- We will monitor the implementation of the strategy and the growth of Australia's robotics ecosystem to ensure we are building the public's trust in robotics and automation, and that the development, adoption and use of robotics is responsible, ethical and inclusive.

Contact: S 22, a/g Manager Robotics & Automation S 22
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Min ID: QB24-000090
Division: Technology and Digital
Created: 24 May 2024
Updated: S 22

QB24-000100

National Science and Research Priorities and National Science Statement

Issue

The Australian Government is committed to revitalising the National Science and Research Priorities and the National Science Statement

Key Talking Points

- Australia's future prosperity, security and wellbeing rely on our capacity to use our science and research strengths.
- Great ideas emerge from science and research to become great products. They become profitable, enduring companies that help build a future made in Australia.
- The Australian Government will soon release the refreshed National Science Statement (the Statement) and the National Science and Research Priorities (the Priorities) to set a long-term direction for Australia's science system.
- The Statement will outline the Australian Government's vision for science driving a dynamic economy in Australia.
- The Priorities will give clarity on the science and research areas Australia needs to focus on, to develop new industries, provide well paid jobs and improve our quality of life.
- The Priorities were developed following extensive consultation through a national conversation led by Australia's Chief Scientist, Dr Cathy Foley, and close to 500 written submissions from two rounds of public consultation.

If asked: The Priorities and Statement were supposed to be released in 2023. Why the delay?

- The development of the Priorities and Statement involved extensive consultations with key stakeholders.
- During the two-stage consultation process, it became apparent that more targeted consultations were required with stakeholders to ensure the Priorities reflected everything we heard was of most importance to Australians.
- The Australian Government also decided to take a little more time to ensure that the Priorities and Statement are informed by other significant government initiatives, such as the Universities Accord and the Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review.

Contact: Adrian Rule, Acting General Manager, Science Policy **S 22**
Cleared by: Adrian Rule, Acting General Manager, Science Policy, **S 22**

Min ID: QB24-000100
Division: Science
Created: 19 July 2024
Updated: **S 22**

QB24-000100**Background**

The Government has finalised the Priorities and Statement. It is finalising arrangements for their release in the coming weeks.

QB24-000100

NATIONAL SCIENCE STATEMENT AND NATIONAL SCIENCE AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Issue

The Australian Government has released the National Science Statement and the National Science and Research Priorities

Key Talking Points

- Science is central to our capacity to deal with the big challenges and disruptions facing our country, and our planet.
- These challenges have changed significantly since the last National Science and Research Priorities were published in 2015:
 - COVID-19 highlighted for us all the value of science in saving lives and the importance of sovereign capability.
 - Science underpins our response to climate change – both reducing emissions and adaptation.
 - New technologies, such as robotics, AI and quantum, are reshaping businesses and economies, opening up new opportunities.
- The National Science Statement and National Science and Research Priorities have been updated to reflect these modern challenges.
- The new National Science Statement outlines the Government's vision for science and research to drive a dynamic economy.
 - It places science at the forefront of Australia's industrial transformation and our commitment to a future made in Australia.
 - It provides a framework for shaping science policy and leadership across governments, in our labs, in research institutions and in boardrooms.

QB24-000100

- The refreshed National Science and Research Priorities identify critical areas of focus for science and research that will help develop new industries, create well paid jobs, and improve our quality of life.
 - They also elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems – celebrating and respecting the deep history and knowledge systems of Australia’s first nations.
- The Priorities identify 5 areas where Australia should focus its science and research efforts. They are:
 - Transitioning to a net zero future
 - Supporting healthy and thriving communities
 - Elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems
 - Protecting and restoring Australia’s environment
 - Building a secure and resilient nation.
- Together, the Statement and the Priorities will set the direction for Australia’s science and research efforts for years to come.

Next steps

- The Government invested an estimated \$26.8 billion in research, science and innovation over 2022-23 and 2023-24.
- From 2024-25, the Government has announced further support for science and R&D, including:
 - \$479.9 million for a new facility for manufacturing nuclear medicines
 - \$39.9 million to support safe and responsible adoption of artificial intelligence
 - \$466.4 million for delivering quantum computing capability through PsiQuantum

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- \$38.2 million for diversity in STEM measures.
- The Government will align expenditure on science and research across government portfolios with the new Priorities, to focus investment and effort where it's needed most.
- We will also continue the conversation with industry, universities, and the research sector about how they can help to back these Priorities in.
- The Government is also commissioning an independent, strategic examination of R&D to ensure we can maximise the contribution of science and R&D to meet the needs of the nation, including its national science and research priorities.

If asked: *Why has it taken longer than expected to release the Priorities and Statement?*

- The development of the Priorities and Statement involved extensive consultations with key stakeholders.
- During the two-stage consultation process, it became apparent that more targeted consultations were required with stakeholders to ensure the Priorities reflected everything we heard was of most importance to Australians.
- The Government also wanted to ensure that the Priorities and Statement were informed by other significant government initiatives, such as the Universities Accord and the Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review.

Contact: S 22, Manager, Science Policy and Diversity in STEM Programs,
Cleared by: S 22 Dianna Gaetjens, General Manager, Science Policy, S 22

Min ID: QB24-000100
Division: Science
Created: 19 July 2024
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QB24-000100

Background

- The Government released the Priorities and Statement on 12 August 2024. The terms of reference were released in September 2022 and stated that the work was to be finalised in 12 months.
- The Priorities and Statement were informed by two phases of a national conversation, led by Australia's Chief Scientist, between February and September 2023.
- In total, almost 700 people contributed to roundtables, workshops, and other meetings and close to 500 written submissions were received through two rounds of public consultations.

Contact: S 22, Manager, Science Policy and Diversity in STEM Programs,
S 22
Cleared by: Dianna Gaetjens, General Manager, Science Policy, S 22

Min ID: QB24-000100
Division: Science
Created: 19 July 2024
Updated: S 22

QB24-000108

Questacon Comcare Matter

Issue

Is Questacon a safe place to visit?

Key Talking Points

- Yes, I am confident Questacon is safe for everyone to visit.
- Last year, Questacon, Australia's National Science and Technology Centre, celebrated 35 years since its official opening.
- Since opening more than 12 and a half million people have visited the Centre. Each year up to half a million Australians pass through the doors of Questacon, with more engaging through its national programs and online resources.
- The safety and wellbeing of both visitors and staff is of paramount importance to Questacon, and both Questacon and the Department of, Industry, Science and Resources are committed to maintaining Questacon as a safe place for all to visit.
- Questacon has inspired Australian children for over three decades and helped them to see their own future in science and technology.

If asked about the current legal action in relation to the safety incident in 2022:

- Our thoughts go out to the young visitor who was injured and their family.
- The department takes these charges very seriously and is committed to the safety of all visitors and staff to Questacon.
- Following the incident Questacon has implemented a range of actions including removal of the plasma ball exhibit.
- This matter is now before the courts, so I am unable to comment on the details of this incident at this time.

Contact: Steve Stirling, General Manager, Operations Branch, Questacon

Cleared by: S 22, Director, Questacon S 22

Min ID: QB24-000108

Division: Questacon

Created: 06 August 2024

Updated: S 22

QB24-000108

QUESTACON COMCARE MATTER

Issue

Is Questacon a safe place to visit?

Key Talking Points

- This matter is now before the courts, so I am unable to comment on the details of this incident at this time.
- I am confident Questacon is safe for everyone to visit.
- Last year, Questacon, Australia's National Science and Technology Centre, celebrated 35 years since its official opening.
- Since opening more than 12 and a half million people have visited the Centre. Each year up to half a million Australians pass through the doors of Questacon, with more engaging through its national programs and online resources.
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Contact: Steve Stirling, General Manager, Operations Branch, Questacon

Cleared by: S 22, Director, Questacon, S 22

Min ID: QB24-000108

Division: Questacon

Created: 06 August 2024

Updated: S 22