



A new policy established to guide Australian radioactive waste management

Australia has benefitted from nuclear activities including medicine production, health and environmental research for 60-70 years. Along with those benefits comes the responsibility to safely manage by-products, including radioactive waste.

The siting of the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility will mean that a significant amount of this waste can be consolidated within a single, safe, purpose-built and state-of-the-art facility.

To support the construction and operation of the new facility, and a more effective and efficient approach to managing our waste, the Australian Government has developed the first **Australian Radioactive Waste Management Framework**. What this does is outline a full lifecycle approach to managing radioactive waste, and confirms that we have the right structures, processes and institutions to do so.

The new Framework modernises Australia's approach to radioactive waste management, in line with international best practice, and provides a policy structure across the full lifecycle from waste production through to disposal.

The National Radioactive Waste Management Facility will be for the permanent disposal site for Australia's low level radioactive waste, and temporary storage facility, likely for several decades, for intermediate level waste.

Importantly, under the new Framework, the Commonwealth Government will begin the process to identify a site for a permanent disposal facility for intermediate level waste, after the existing proposed Facility is built.

This additional facility will require completely different site characteristics to the one currently being considered.

The Framework sets out the principles and long-term goals for Australia's radioactive waste management.

What the new Framework does:

- ✓ Confirms the requirements for a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility, in terms of waste acceptance, obligations and liability, as well as management arrangements.
- ✓ Establishes appropriate arrangements, practices and policies to coordinate and manage radioactive waste between agencies and jurisdictions.
- ✓ Confirms a process for developing a second, separate disposal facility for intermediate level waste in a location with different site characteristics.
- ✓ Sets engagement requirements between the different levels of government, as well as the regulators.



Waste quantities

The new Framework also updates the public record on how much radioactive waste is stored in Australia. As at the beginning of 2018, the volume of existing low level waste to be disposed of at the Facility is 4,975m³ and the volume of existing intermediate level waste is 1,771m³. These volumes include waste packaging. Australia does not have high level waste.

It also includes estimated future volumes of waste including the packaging required for disposal or storage at the facility. It is estimated that there will be an additional 4,843m³ of low level waste and 1,963m³ of intermediate level waste to 1 January 2070.

These numbers are larger than previous estimates. This is not because we have discovered major new sources of waste, but because previous estimates were based on raw waste volumes and did not take into account final conditioned and packaged volumes.

A new waste management office

The Framework identified that an office within Government will be assigned the responsibility of coordinating and managing waste holdings, policies and practices, including:

- technical coordination and centralised function for the whole-of-life management of the Australian Government's radioactive waste, as well as the Australian waste sent by others to the facility;
- managing the relocation of radioactive waste to the Facility;
- developing the disposal pathway for Intermediate Level Waste; and
- managing a national inventory database.



For more information

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