

Australia calls Denmark waste ship U-turn 'unfortunate'

December 24 2010



Morning breaks at Copenhagen's North harbour in 2009. Australia Friday said it was "unfortunate" that Denmark had cancelled plans to receive and destroy shipments of thousands of tonnes of hazardous waste, as the company involved considered its next move.

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Environment Minister Tony Burke said the decision was made on political rather than safety grounds, and followed strong opposition to disposing of the highly toxic hexachlorobenzene at a specialised facility west of Copenhagen.

"(Danish environment minister Karen Ellemann) informed me about the

political situation and debate in Denmark, which -- regrettably -- has led to the political conclusion that the shipment should not proceed," Burke said.

"Mrs. Ellemann assured me that all required environmental and safety assessments have been conducted to the satisfaction of the Danish authorities, and that the Danish conclusion therefore by nature is political."

Burke added that it was an "unfortunate situation".

Denmark postponed the shipments this month and finally cancelled them on Thursday following a backlash based on environmental concerns. The shipments, due to travel halfway round the world, had also been criticised by [Greenpeace](#).

Chemicals company Orica, which has been stockpiling the solvents by-product since the 1960s in the absence of facilities to destroy it in Australia, would not comment on possible alternative arrangements.

"We will be reviewing all of our options and obviously we will continue to store the waste safely into the future, and evaluating what options are available to destroy the waste," said corporate affairs manager John Fetter.

Moving the 6,100 tonnes of [toxic chemicals](#) had been approved by both the Australian and Danish governments under the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of [Hazardous Waste](#).

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Citation: Australia calls Denmark waste ship U-turn 'unfortunate' (2010, December 24) retrieved 20 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2010-12-australia-denmark-ship-u-turn-unfortunate.html>

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