

Australia reveals shortlist for first nuclear waste dump

November 13 2015

Nuclear waste

Australian government shortlisted six sites for a nuclear waste dump



- Chosen site will receive up to Aus\$10 m (US\$7 m) to fund community causes
- Final decision expected late 2016

Source: Government

AFP

Map of Australia locating six sites shortlisted by the government for a nuclear waste dump. 90 x 68 mm

Australia on Friday announced six sites, including some in Outback areas, on a shortlist for the nation's first nuclear waste dump, risking fresh controversy after an earlier plan was scuttled by opposition from

Aboriginal landowners.

The government said it had received 28 applications from owners willing to house low to intermediate waste—mostly by-products of nuclear medicine—and had whittled that down to six which will be subject to feedback and consultation.

Plans to locate Australia's first [nuclear waste](#) dump at the remote Muckaty Station in the sparsely populated Northern Territory were abandoned in 2014 after a long battle with indigenous landowners.

"Australia has an international obligation to deal with its own low-level and intermediate nuclear waste that it creates. And currently this waste is stored at around 100 sites in Australia," Resources Minister Josh Frydenberg said Friday.

"We will only go ahead with the support of the local communities."

The minister said the low-level waste, including material left over from medical treatments such as paper, gloves and goggles, would be enough to fill two Olympic-size swimming pools.

There was a smaller amount of intermediate waste, which includes steel rods used in Australia's only nuclear reactor, a facility mostly used for nuclear medicine and research.

The minister said that apart from payment to the landowner, the chosen site would receive up to Aus\$10 million (US\$7 million) to fund community causes. A final decision is expected in late 2016.

Frydenberg said the project only related to storing Australia's radioactive waste.

But Greenpeace Australia Pacific said that creating a new waste facility was "a clear invitation to other countries to use Australia as a nuclear dumping ground".

South Australian lawmaker Rowan Ramsey, a leading supporter of the project whose electorate includes three of the sites, said he was hopeful a "scare campaign" would not derail what he said be a boon for the local economy.

The six areas, all hundreds of kilometres from major cities, are Sallys Flat in New South Wales, Cortlinye, Pinkawillinie and Barndioota in South Australia, Hale in the Northern Territory and Oman Ama in Queensland.

Residents in some areas are not keen.

"I would prefer for it to be out in the desert or right away from where people are living," Neva Lilley, who lives near the proposed New South Wales site, told the national broadcaster ABC.

Frydenberg's announcement comes amid growing debate about nuclear energy in Australia, which has one of the world's largest reserve of uranium but does not use nuclear power.

A Royal Commission in South Australia state is currently investigating all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle.

In the 1990s and early 2000s Australia sent [radioactive waste](#) from [spent nuclear fuel](#) to France for reprocessing, and 25 tonnes of this reprocessed material is now on a ship on its way back.

Once it arrives, the material will be kept at the Lucas Heights reactor in southern Sydney until the nuclear waste dump site is selected and built.

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