



National Radioactive Waste Management Facility

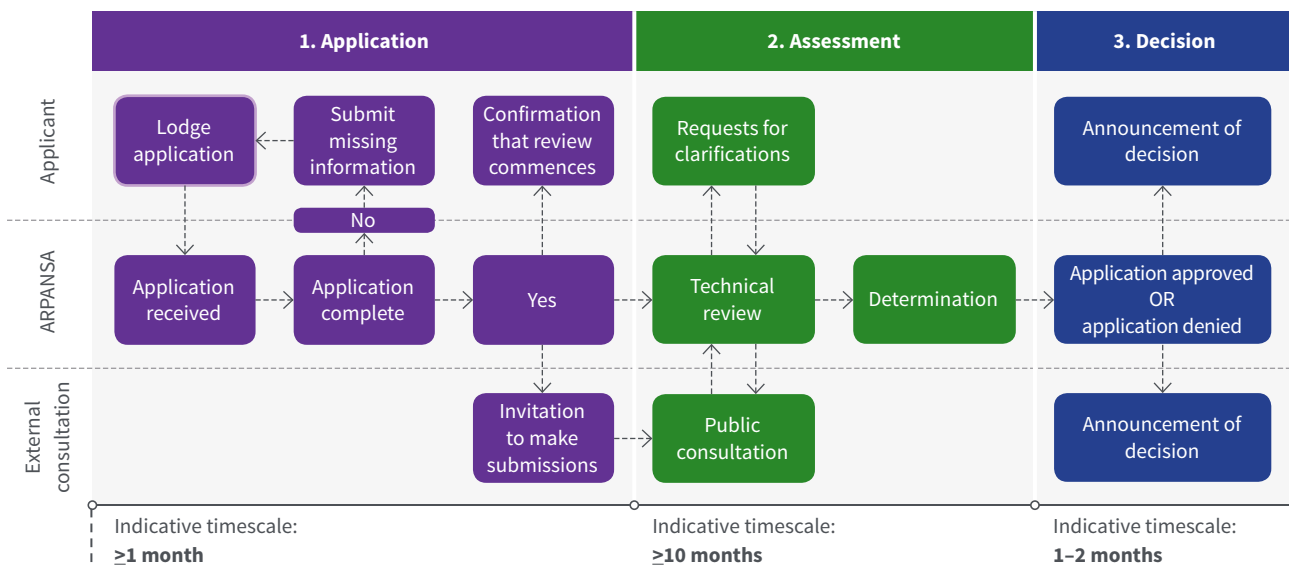
The licensing process

The process to license a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF) is described in ARPANSA’s *Regulatory Guide: Applying for a licence for a radioactive waste storage or disposal facility* (May 2017) (the Guide) and *Information for Stakeholders: Radioactive Waste Storage and Disposal Facilities* (May 2017).

The Guide describes the legislative framework applying to such a licence, the licensing process, the protection of people and the environment (including the need for a safety case) and outlines international best practice.

The essence of the licensing decision is whether the applicant can supply a safety case¹ that satisfies the ARPANSA CEO that the facility would not have an adverse impact on human health or the environment. The CEO is required to take into account international best practice² in relation to radiation protection and nuclear safety. The CEO must also invite public submissions on the application and take any submissions into account when making a licensing decision. The process is shown in the diagram below:

The licensing process



¹ See ‘*The safety case*’ fact sheet for more information | ² See ‘*International Best Practice*’ fact sheet for more information

Commonwealth legislative requirements

The establishment of an NRWMF is governed by the *National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012*.

The key legislation governing the licensing of an NRWMF is the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency Act 1998* and the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Regulations 1999*. An NRWMF would also need to adhere to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, and the *Nuclear Non-Proliferation (Safeguards) Act 1987*.

Staged licensing process

The licensing of a facility for the storage or disposal of radioactive waste is a staged process.

The different stages include:

- licence to prepare a site
- licence to construct
- licence to operate
- licence to decommission (waste store)
- licence to close (waste disposal facility)
- site release and surrender of licence.

The diagram below illustrates that monitoring and surveillance is undertaken throughout the life of the facility from before construction until the site is released from regulatory control.

Following closure of a disposal facility, the period of institutional control may extend well beyond 100 years during which time there is ongoing monitoring and surveillance. After this time, the site will be released from regulatory control and the licence will be surrendered. The site will then be in a period of passive safety.

The staged approach allows for continuous improvement in the design, operation and safety through the lifetime of the facility; the safety case and accompanying safety assessments are reviewed and developed accordingly.

The licence application for each stage needs to be forward looking and contain sufficient information on the safety and security aspects of subsequent stages, to allow the CEO to make an informed decision.

A new licence application is required for each stage of a facility. For co-located facilities, such as a waste store and a disposal facility there will be one application per facility.

