

Concern with disclosure

31. ARWA continues to provide advice to the Government, directly through the Minister for Resources, and indirectly to other portfolios, concerning the decisions Government should take with respect to the matter I describe in paragraph 27 above. I anticipate that the Government's ability to make a decision on this matter is likely to be adversely impacted by disclosure of the parts of documents which go to this issue. I say this for the following reasons.
32. Firstly, I expect that if the documents are disclosed in a way that reveals the deliberations relating to the issues of ARWA concern, it will shape public debate about the management and disposal of submarine waste in ways that pre-empt, skew and foreclose proper consideration of the options. Specifically, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], there is a risk that documents create a perception, expectation, or narrative which will be difficult to dislodge, and which could undermine government decision making. By making this a talking point for public consideration, there is a risk it undermines government processes and trust with public and stakeholders, in circumstances where Government may not be inclined, or ready, to favour this approach. This undermines effective decision-making and would be damaging. Resources may need to be committed to countering mis- or dis-information relating to forthcoming Government decisions on disposal pathways; these resources would be better deployed in developing fully considered advice.
33. Secondly, I also expect that disclosure will undermine the current and future viability of ARWA's broader work and ability to discharge its functions. **The release of information in these circumstances that does not align with current messaging or status on [REDACTED]—which heavily relies on public approval—could negatively impact trust, and the building and sustaining of the social license that ARWA and the Australian Government will need to deliver [REDACTED]**
34. Prematurely releasing information without context about government options risks hindering the ability to implement chosen solutions. Building trust requires careful thought, preparation and substantial time and resources; it can be easily damaged by unclear or speculative disclosures. Effective public and stakeholder engagement should follow a well-managed process with clear goals and boundaries, avoiding confusion and speculation from contextually incomplete information.
35. Thirdly, I am concerned that disclosure of specific details about future policy advice on a matter that would need to be determined by the Cabinet would inhibit the Government's future consideration of the issue. The management and storage of Australia's radioactive waste holdings is a significant issue for Government.