

## NUCLEAR SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Summary of the meeting held on 13 December 1999

#### ATTENDANCE

All appointed members, with the exception of Professor Melchers who was an apology (Item 2 on the agenda), were in attendance.

#### 1. OPENING OF MEETING

Ms. Sylvia Kidziak, the Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed all members. As this was the first meeting of the Committee, each member gave a brief introduction of themselves to the Committee outlining their area of expertise or speciality.

#### 3. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chair summarised the functions of the Nuclear Safety Committee (NSC) as prescribed in the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998* including:

- Advising the CEO and the RH&SAC on matters relating to nuclear safety and the safety of controlled facilities;
- Review and assessment of the effectiveness of standards, codes, practices and procedures relating to controlled facilities;
- Develop policies and prepare draft publications to promote uniform national standards relating to controlled facilities; and
- Reporting to the CEO on nuclear safety matters and the safety of controlled facilities.

Dr John Loy, CEO of ARPANSA, addressed the Committee, defining the role of the CEO, the RH&SAC, the NSC and ARPANSA and summarised the relevant sections of the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998*. His view was that the role of the NSC would be analogous to the Radiation Health Committee (RHC), performing similar duties, but with an emphasis on Nuclear Safety. It was also noted that the CEO reports to Parliament on ARPANSA, the Council, RHC and NSC.

The Chair welcomed Dr Rick McLean, Chair of the RH&SAC. He outlined some of the issues considered by the Council including the Australian Radiation Incidents Register, involvement in the RF Standard, the research reactor, waste repository and other NSC issues and confidentiality/indemnity issues.

The Chair requested that the Secretariat provide the Committee with a report from RHC, a summary of the Council meeting and provide any documents that may be of interest to the Committee.

## **4. ARPANSA'S ACTIVITIES**

### **4.1 Outline Of ARPANSA and Relationship with the Council/RHC**

Dr Loy provided information on ARPANSA's background, its formation and its role in radiation protection in Australia. Recent ARPANSA work includes:

- ongoing monitoring for compliance with the international Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty;
- as a health physics adviser and auditor for the Maralinga cleanup
- investigating non-ionizing radiation issues;
- as a regulator of Commonwealth entities including CSIRO, Department of Defence and ANSTO; and
- dealing with the application to site the replacement reactor.

It was agreed that future meetings of the Committee should have a standing agenda item on ARPANSA activities.

### **4.2 Regulation of Controlled Facilities**

Details of licensing criteria and information required from an applicant to obtain a Facility Licence or a Source Licence were given to the Committee by Mr Don Macnab, Director, Regulatory Branch of ARPANSA. Mr Macnab explained that applications would need to be judged against objective criteria and that an application would need to contain general information, details of plans and arrangements for managing safety and any additional information such as a safety assessment.

As the CEO must take into account submissions in relation to the issue of a licence, details of the application need to be available for public comment. The Freedom of Information legislation would need to be considered in releasing such information, for example details of site security. Where aspects of an application must remain confidential, the reasons for confidentiality would have to be clear and explicit.

The Committee endorsed an open regulatory process by ARPANSA.

### **4.3 Licence Applications for Controlled Facilities**

The **Summary Table of Facility Licence Applications** contained in the document **Applications to the CEO of ARPANSA for Licence for Controlled Facilities** was briefly discussed.

### **4.4 Safety Case For the HIFAR Research Reactor**

Under ARPANSA legislation, the requirements of the former Nuclear Safety Bureau are now requirements of the CEO with more consideration given to the **Reactor Design Requirements** specified in part 5 of the tabled document **Nuclear Safety Bureau Requirements**.

The Committee was advised that even though a formal licence had not yet been issued by ARPANSA, by meeting the NSB requirements, safe operation of HIFAR had not been compromised.

#### **4.5 Replacement Reactor**

The documents **Safety Evaluation Report on ANSTO Application for Licence to Prepare a site for the Replacement Research Reactor (App No. F0001)** and **Issue of a Licence to the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation to Prepare a Site for a Replacement Research Reactor Facility – Statement by the CEO of ARPANSA** were provided to the Committee. These documents would be available for public consultation with associated technical information.

The Committee felt it was critical that an appropriate reference accident had been applied as part of the ARPANSA siting assessment. The Committee requested that it be provided with an indicative timeframe for the ARPANSA review process for the replacement reactor.

### **5. GENERAL ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE**

#### **5.1 Identification Of Areas In Which ARPANSA Will Require Committee Advice**

#### **5.2 Identification by Chair of Areas That Committee Might Address**

The Committee was advised that the CEO wanted the Committee to consider design, siting and planning principles for licensing decisions. The Committee was requested to provide comments on priorities to the Secretariat for the Chair to discuss with the CEO.

#### **5.3 Identification by Committee Members of Areas Committee Might Address**

A suggestion was made that information sessions or meetings on operational safety systems currently in place could be provided to Committee members away from the formalised meeting forum. The Committee saw this as valuable.

### **6. SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR CONTROLLED FACILITIES**

#### **6.1 Process for Review and Publication of Guidelines**

#### **6.2 Status of Current Drafts of Safety Guidelines**

#### **6.3 Draft Document: Safety Assessment Principles for Controlled Facilities**

The ARPANSA document entitled **Regulatory Assessment Documents for Controlled Facilities** was tabled. It was agreed for the NSC to consider Nuclear Safety Codes and Standards as appropriate.

Review of the **Safety Assessment Principles for Controlled Facilities (SAP)** was seen as a high priority role of the Committee and nominations for a working party were requested.

The role of the Working Party would be to:

- (a) Review the SAP;
- (b) Recommend revisions where necessary; and
- (c) Report proposed revisions to the NSC for consideration/approval.

The first meeting to be held by the end of February 2000 and the recommendations of the Working Group, once approved by the NSC, would, in turn, be passed onto RH&SAC and ARPANSA.

Ms McSorley tabled a December 1998 document prepared by the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee on **Consideration of Legislation Referred to the Committee** for the information of Members.

## **7. GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **7.1 Report On Tokaimura Accident**

The documents, **Criticality Accident at Tokaimura, Japan 30 September 1999** and the IAEA paper **Report on the preliminary fact finding mission following the accident at the nuclear fuel processing facility in Tokaimura, Japan** were tabled for information.

The Committee requested that the results of ANSTO reviews into their criticality safety arrangements, as requested by the Regulatory Branch of ARPANSA, be tabled at the next meeting. The outcomes of any review would be placed in the quarterly review of the CEO with copies made available to the Committee.

## **8. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS**

### **8.1 Procedural Matters**

Members requested clarification of consultation arrangements in relation to matters before the Committee. The document **Draft Decision of Council Regarding Availability of Minutes** was brought to the attention of the Committee.

### **8.2 Meeting Schedule**

It was proposed to meet three times per year while recognising that a fourth meeting in a given year might be required if the volume of work necessitated it.

## **9. CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for 3 April 2000.