

Nuclear Safety Committee

an advisory body to the CEO of ARPANSA, established under the ARPANS Act 1998

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Summary of the meeting held on 12 July 2002 Stamford Hotel Sydney

OPENING OF MEETING

All Members attended with the exception of Professor Rob Melchers who had tendered his apologies.

CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 19 APRIL 2002

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted with minor amendments.

FUTURE AGENDA FOR THE NSC

Selection Criteria for Membership

The appointment of each Member of NSC was due to expire on 31 October 2002. Appointments to NSC are subject to consultation with the Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council (RHSAC), whose term of office expires during August 2002. RHSAC Members are, in turn, subject to appointment by the Minister. Dr Loy advised that he was able to extend the appointment of the NSC Members for a short time and consequently, he intended to extend the appointments until 31 December 2002. This would allow the Committee to continue until new Members could be appointed.

He asked the Committee for any suggestions on areas where Members thought that additional expertise would help the Committee. Some suggestions included additional expertise in:

- geology;
- risk management;
- waste repository issues;
- communication and public presentation of regulatory documents;
- emergency planning and consultation; or
- environmental issues.

The Members generally agreed that it would be desirable to focus outside government ranks for expertise for Committee membership but appreciated that nuclear safety expertise in Australia was a small field.

Issues for Future Consideration

The Committee suggested some issues, additional to those suggested at the April meeting, for future consideration including:

- radioactive waste emissions to the environment;
- regulatory procedures of ARPANSA;
- emergency planning;
- international developments on spent fuel and other issues;
- radiation health issues such as the proposed changes to ICRP dose limits; and
- the decommissioning of HIFAR.

REPORTS

General Report from the CEO

The Committee received a brief report on recent activities of the CEO and ARPANSA including:

- the Research Reactor Meeting in Vienna in May relating to the drafting of a Code of Conduct for countries with research reactors. The meeting had been productive with a move from a generic document to a more specific one. Another meeting of this group was planned for later in 2002.
- the second triennial review meeting of the Nuclear Safety Convention in Vienna in April. Australia was the only country to assess its research reactor against the power reactor convention and the report was well received.
- Dr Loy advised that Australia had still not ratified the Proposed Convention on Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste and if it were not ratified, Australia would not be able to attend the first review meeting in late 2003.

Report on Council — Draft Agenda for Meeting of 9 August 2002

The Committee was advised that a Working Group of the Council was in the process of finalising a report on radioactive waste.

Report on RHC — Draft Agenda for Meeting of 31 July-1 August 2002

The Committee was informed that several Codes of Practice, Standards and Guidelines were to be tabled for consideration at the next RHC meeting. Members were also reminded of the procedures for drafting, preparation, consultation and publishing of Codes and Standards.

The Committee was also advised of the special working group of the RHC, the National Uniformity Implementation Panel (Radiation Control). This Panel had been created to investigate uniformity issues across Australia including acting as steering committee for the National Competition Policy review, the development of the National Directory for Radiation Protection and other jurisdictional uniformity issues.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Replacement Research Reactor — Update on Seismic Issues

Dr Loy briefed the Committee on matters relating to the discovery of a seismic fault in the excavation prepared for the construction of the replacement research reactor at Lucas Heights. His presentation is available at <http://www.arpansa.gov.au/pubs/fault.pdf>.

Any reports on investigations of the fault line would be made public on the ARPANSA web site and Members would be invited to attend any briefing meetings relating to the fault line.

Spent Fuel Processing in Argentina

The Committee discussed aspects of the Argentinian constitution and how it related to the definition of 'spent fuel' and 'radioactive waste'.

Solidification of Isotope Waste and On-site and Off-site Management/Disposal

Dr Loy advised that he was unaware if any country was committing to Synroc as an ongoing waste disposal option. The Synroc issue could be placed on a future agenda and Members would be advised accordingly.

Emergency Planning for Lucas Heights

The Committee was briefed on the emergency arrangements that applied to the Lucas Heights site. Emergency plans were exercised regularly and ARPANSA oversees these exercises.

The Committee agreed that duplication of ANSTO emergency response teams by State authorities demonstrated a degree of independence to the public.

Dr Loy assured the Committee that the public would be provided with information on the potential exposures for a sabotage accident for emergency planning purposes as soon as resources permit.

Reclassification of Aircraft Accidents from Commercial-in-Confidence to Security-in-Confidence

Security-in-confidence for the reactor design in relation to aircraft accidents had been claimed as there was potential for the information to be misused by terrorists. The reactor design would however, follow the methodology outlined in the US Department of Energy Standard 'Accident Analysis for Aircraft Crash into Hazardous Facilities'. This document was available on the US DOE Web site at <http://tis.eh.doe.gov/techstds/standard/std3014/std3014.pdf>.

ANSTO Assessment of Exposure pathways From Liquid Effluent Discharges

ARPANSA was still assessing this particular report and more information could be requested from ANSTO if exposure pathways had not been considered adequately.

The Committee recommended that ANSTO be asked to provide more information on water re-use, recycling from the sewer and a better quality risk assessment on the issue.

CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday 15 November 2002 although an extraordinary briefing meeting on the seismic fault could take place before then.