



Summary of the meeting held on 27 October 2006 ARPANSA – Yallambie Campus

OPENING OF MEETING

All Members attended with the exception of Mr Jim Hondros and Dr Rob Melchers who had tendered their apologies.

CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 16 JUNE 2006

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed without amendment.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 16 JUNE 2006

Dr Loy updated the Committee on developments relating to the incident in Building 54 at ANSTO that was reported to Members at the June 2006 meeting. ANSTO had provided ARPANSA a report of the incident, which was available to Members if required.

Rather than restart the process of producing molybdenum, ANSTO was proceeding with establishing a new molybdenum production process. This new process would be an alkaline one whereas the previous process was acidic. A more comprehensive briefing on the regulation of ARI would be given to the Committee at its next meeting in February 2007.

THE OPERATING LICENCE APPLICATION FOR THE OPAL REACTOR

Report from the CEO on the operating licence decision for the OPAL Reactor

Dr Loy briefed the Committee on his decision to grant a licence to ANSTO to operate the OPAL Reactor and highlighted several items in his report. Periodic safety reviews of the facility were important conditions and the first review would need to be completed within two years of the commencement of operations of the OPAL Reactor. The issues of spent fuel and radioactive waste management were also covered.

Progress with Hot Commissioning

Following the issue of the operating licence by ARPANSA, fuel had been obtained for the OPAL Reactor and hot commissioning of the reactor had commenced. The commissioning process was designed to test the behaviour of the nuclear core and operating and safety systems under various operating conditions before full operating power was achieved. Stage B commissioning was complete and ANSTO had sought approval to go to Stage C commissioning.

Before proceeding to Stage C, ANSTO had been required to address matters arising from a failure of a diesel generator under test.

During Stage C commissioning, it had become evident that the temperature sensors for the primary coolant flow out of the core were not recording the appropriate temperature. This had arisen because of flow from the cooler reactor pool water. A temporary modification appeared to have resolved the issue. ARPANSA would require a permanent fix before ANSTO could move from stage C commissioning to normal operating conditions.

DRAFT REGULATORY GUIDANCE FOR RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

ARPANSA response to public comment – briefing

The draft regulatory guidance document for radioactive waste management facilities was intended to provide regulatory advice to any potential applicant for a licence to site, construct and operate such a facility. Several submissions from the Northern Territory Government, DEST, ANSTO and other public stakeholders had been received and the document had been revised in light of the comment received.

Members noted that public consent was an important aspect of a site selection process however, it was unlikely that there would be full public consent no matter where a site was selected. The Committee ultimately agreed that while public consent was important for the operator, it was not a safety issue for the regulator.

Revised Regulatory Guidance

The regulatory guidance document would need to be available to any prospective proponent of a radioactive waste management facility in the short term even though it was only guidance material. It was expected that a potential site for a radioactive waste management facility could be chosen by the end of 2007 and the document would be needed before then to inform the exploration and selection process for the proponent.

DECOMMISSIONING OF NUCLEAR FACILITIES

International Guidance on decommissioning

The IAEA has indicated that the preferred decommissioning process was the immediate dismantling of a facility although it was acknowledged that there could be arguments for delaying the dismantling. Overseas decommissioning experience from similar reactors to HIFAR would be an important consideration in issuing a licence to decommission HIFAR and it was noted that Denmark was currently decommissioning a similar research reactor, which could provide valuable information on the process.

Experience with decommissioning on the ANSTO site was limited because Moata was a different decommissioning process from HIFAR and the licence issued to decommission it was very early in the life of ARPANSA.

ANSTO planning for decommissioning

It was intended that ANSTO be permitted to operate HIFAR until the end of February 2007 after which closure activities would commence. Many of the preliminary decommissioning activities were no different from what is normally done during a major shutdown.

ANSTO would be required to provide a decommissioning strategy for HIFAR that would need to clearly state the intent of the decommissioning process and its relationship with international best practice.

A formal application for a licence to “possess and control” would need to clearly draw out all of the issues and explain why such a licence was needed.

REPORTS

General Report from the CEO

Dr Loy advised of his attendance at an NEA OECD task force meeting in September 2006. Topics discussed at the meeting included nuclear regulatory decision making and assuring nuclear safety.

He also attended the [IAEA general conference in Vienna from 18-22 September 2006](#) during which a [Senior Regulators' Meeting](#) was held (21 September 2006). The Senior Regulators' Meeting was a forum for the exchange of information on current regulatory issues and trends among senior government officials involved in regulatory matters in the fields of nuclear, radiation, transport and radioactive waste safety and security.

As part of the general conference, the IAEA held a [Special Event on Assurances of Nuclear Supply and Non-Proliferation](#) to address policy, legal, and technical issues relating to nuclear issues.

Report on Council – Meeting of 4 August 2006

Members noted the tabled [Web summary](#) from the previous Council meeting.

Professor Johnston also provided a briefing to the Committee on the progress of [Uranium Mining, Processing and Nuclear Energy Review \(UMPNER\)](#). The UMPNER review was involved with looking at the ramifications of and hazards associated with:

- extending uranium mining from its current level in Australia;
- conversion of yellow cake to uranium hexafluoride;
- enrichment of the uranium;
- fabrication of uranium oxide pellets and loading into fuel assemblies;
- nuclear power;
- waste reprocessing; and
- waste disposal.

A draft final report would be released on 21 November 2006 and the final report would be presented to the Prime Minister by the end of 2006.

Report on RHC – Meetings of 19-20 July 2006 and 25-26 October 2006

Members noted the tabled [Web summary](#) from the previous RHC meeting.

Update on the ANAO audit report of ARPANSA

ARPANSA had requested that the IAEA organise an Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission to examine and report on the ARPANSA regulatory system. The Mission would cover all of ARPANSA's activities but would only consider the regulatory activities of the States and Territories in relation to uniformity issues. Ideally, the IRRS team Members would meet with both the Nuclear Safety Committee and the Radiation Health Committee to discuss regulatory issues. The Mission was scheduled to take place in the second half of May 2007.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Committee received a briefing on the [15th Pacific Basin Nuclear Conference held in Sydney from 15-20 October 2006](#). Conference sessions included nuclear power, generation four reactors, nuclear fusion, the nuclear fuel cycle, low dose, the proposed ICRP recommendations, radiation oncology and other associated topics. Two hundred papers were presented during the conference and four hundred people attended. The conference was considered a technical success.

CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 23 February 2007 at Miranda.