

## RADIATION HEALTH & SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL

### Summary of meeting held on 1 December 2000

#### 1. OPENING OF MEETING, ATTENDANCE & 2. APOLOGIES

All members were present except for Dr Johnston (the Chair confirmed that Dr Johnston had now been appointed to Council). Ms Kidziak and Dr Smith (for items 7, 8, 10-14) participated by teleconference. Dr Dickie attended for items 1-7, 9 and Dr Robb attended for items 1-9.

#### 3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 24 JULY 2000

The minutes were confirmed with the following amendments:

- In section 7.2 replace the second last sentence with "*The Chair noted that Council is a high-level advisory body and its role, as set out in the legislation, relates to providing advice on matters pertaining to radiation health and nuclear safety. Therefore it is appropriate that Council considers policy areas and provides advice relevant to radiation health and nuclear safety to inform public debate and subsequent policy decision making.*"
- In section 7.4 delete Ms Plues from Precautionary Principle Working Group.

#### 4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Dr Smart provided an update in relation to the Repatriation Medical Authority working group discussed in the CEO's report at the last meeting. The paper on the non-human environment had been held over due to rapid development in the international arena. It will be progressed using the latest thinking arising from international meetings. The memorandum of understanding with Standards Australia was progressing and a draft may be available in about 1 month. The memorandum of understanding with the National Occupational Health & Safety Commission should be placed on the next Council agenda.

#### 5. WORKING GROUP ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Dr McLean reported on a meeting of the Working Group on Radioactive Waste, held on 30 November 2000 at Miranda. The initial request for advice from the CEO was two-fold; to provide initial general advice about radioactive waste and to provide subsequent detailed advice on disposal of intermediate level waste. The initial Working Group terms of reference were agreed as follows:

*To provide advice to Council so that Council may advise the CEO on both current and potential matters relating to radiation protection and nuclear safety in Australia in relation to transport, storage, and disposal of radioactive waste, taking into consideration current national policies.*

Members commented on the scope of work proposed. The Chair advised that it was intended that the group would examine the issues at an overview level, considering international best practice, sourcing documents, highlighting deficiencies, exploring options and identifying the need for further work.

## **6. WORKING GROUP ON PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE**

Dr Dickie reported on a meeting of the Working Group on Precautionary Principle. A short paper outlining the discussion was tabled. The Working Group had discussed its terms of reference and felt that its main purpose was to advise Council on the precautionary approach/principle. It noted that most uses of the precautionary principle are outside radiation protection. In particular, the Working Group was aware of various definitions and terminology used in relation to precautionary approaches. Precautionary approaches were generally used in areas where a risk assessment cannot be done due to uncertainty.

## **7. INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGY**

The Chair had written to the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand about radiation exposure during interventional cardiology, and the letter and reply were tabled. The President of the Society is to nominate another representative to progress discussions with the Council. Council noted that Radiation Health Committee has formed a Scoping Group on Medical Radiation Issues, and suggested that this group should consider the use of radiation by medical practitioners other than radiologists. Access to radiation protection information by medical specialists who were not radiologists is an issue.

## **8. ARPANSA CONSIDERATION OF CONSTRUCTION LICENCE FOR REPLACEMENT REACTOR**

The CEO tabled a paper that outlined, for planning purposes, a timetable, public involvement process and role of the Nuclear Safety Committee (NSC) in relation to ARPANSA's consideration of the construction licence for the Replacement Research Reactor. He asked Council to note the proposed process and consider any role it should have.

It is assumed that an application for licence to construct will be received in about May 2001. A Preliminary Safety Analysis Report (PSAR) will form the basis of ARPANSA's assessment. An independent peer review of the PSAR will also be undertaken and made public. A number of key issues have been identified (seismicity design basis, proposed fuels and disposition of spent fuels, reference accident assumptions) and NSC will play a role in advice on these. It is also proposed to formally put questions to ANSTO and INVAP in two rounds, and to put both questions and answers on the public record. There would then be a further round of public submissions prior to final licensing decisions. Council members felt that NSC should consider the issues and the Council's role would be to advise NSC when requested. NSC would keep Council informed of its discussions and those of its working groups.

## **9. PROGRESS WITH RADIOFREQUENCY STANDARD**

The CEO, together with Mr Wayne Cornelius, presented a review of progress towards a radiofrequency standard. The CEO noted that the Standard would contain more than just the exposure limits. It would contain an analysis of the literature and a detailed rationale, which was important for public discussion. The Standard would set different occupational and public exposure limits. The draft is well advanced. The Working Group will meet again on 19-20 December 2000 and hopes to finalise the draft and present it to the Radiation Health Committee following that meeting. The public comment period could be late January or February 2001, and the Working Group would then review public comment before final submission to the Radiation Health Committee. Council was also informed of a change to the Working Group membership.

## **10. COUNCIL AND THE PUBLIC**

### **10.1 Open meetings (Letter from Councillor Rankin 31/10/00)**

The Chair discussed the letter from Councillor Genevieve Rankin of Sutherland Shire Council, and his reply of 20 November 2000. Councillor Rankin had written commenting on various aspects of the public process involved with the replacement reactor and the HIFAR reactor. In particular, she had requested that Council meetings be open to the public.

Council members discussed various options for improving public access to Council deliberations. These included holding a media/public conference immediately following each Council meeting, to invite representatives for particular topics, or to hold separate public meetings at times it chooses. Members noted that Council was an advisory body, and that the view in some public groups that the Council has a power of veto over ARPANSA and CEO decisions was wrong. Council members strongly supported the concept of having its decisions widely known such as by placing meeting summaries on the Web.

The Chair summarised the discussion and stated that as there were three Council members absent, there would be no final decision until their feedback could be obtained. The Chair will draft and circulate a response advising that there had been considerable discussion, that Council will look at creative options to improve public involvement, and that as some members had been absent a final decision would be made at the next meeting.

### **10.2 Protocol for public consultation**

A draft of the Protocol for Public Consultation was tabled. This document had now been considered by the Council and Committees and had now returned to Council to be finalised. One change was made to broaden the words relating to media advertising. The Protocol was then agreed as final.

## **11. REPORT FROM THE CEO**

The CEO tabled a report covering recent ARPANSA activities. It included a summary of his visit to the IAEA General Conference and Senior Regulators meeting. He also held discussions with regulatory bodies in the Republic of Korea, including a visit to the Hanaro reactor, which is similar in design to the replacement research reactor. The Maralinga licence has now been issued. It included licence conditions for ongoing management, and sketched some parameters for a future licence application to decommission the site. Submissions had been made to two Senate committees, on the contract for the replacement reactor, and on electromagnetic radiation. Considerable progress has been made in licensing ANSTO's existing facilities. Public submissions closed on 17 November 2000. A public meeting on the replacement reactor had been held in Sutherland on 9 November. The CEO advised that he would be going to Argentina in December to an IAEA Conference, to meet with INVAP and the Argentinian regulators. He also advised that Prof. Roger Clarke, Chair of the International Commission on Radiological Protection, would be visiting Australia in March 2001 and would meet with the Radiation Health Committee.

## **12. COMMITTEE & KEY ISSUE REPORTS**

### **12.1 Report from Radiation Health Committee (RHC)**

Mrs Fitch tabled a report on the RHC meeting of 1-2 November 2000. RHC had agreed to the formation of a Business Working Group to progress items out of session. Key issues discussed

included dose limits and the review or rebadging of RHS publication 39, development of a standard Annex on health effects and dose limits, progress on the Transport Code, development of a National Directory for Radiation Protection, formation of a working group to review the Code on Disposal of Radioactive Waste by the User, a proposed work program in the medical radiation area, a detailed progress report on the radiofrequency Standard, and a progress report on review of the Mining Health and Waste Code. The next meeting was scheduled to coincide with Professor Clarke's visit.

## **12.2 Report from Nuclear Safety Committee (NSC)**

Ms Kidziak tabled a report on the NSC meeting of 10 November 2000. The report to the meeting included the seismic modelling study, dose limits in relation to RHS 39, a site-wide airborne discharge authorisation for ANSTO, and a proposed site visit to ANSTO by NSC. The Safety Assessment Principles for Controlled Facilities (SAP) was being reviewed in parallel with the Regulatory Assessment Criteria for the Design of Controlled Facilities and Modification of Existing Facilities (RAC). The SAP was now ready for review by a technical editor, and the RAC review was in its final stage. Any outstanding issues were to be highlighted for specific comment in the public comment process. Both documents would need to be available for public comment in January. The timetable for consideration of the construction licence for the replacement reactor was discussed. Spent fuel, progress on licensing existing ANSTO facilities, and the information session on 9 November had also been considered. NSC intended to hold three meetings next year.

## **12.3 Report on Uniformity Process & 12.4 Report on National Competition Principles Review of Radiation Legislation**

Reports on progress towards developing a National Directory for Radiation Protection and the National Competition Principles Review of Radiation Protection Legislation were tabled for members' information.

## **13. OTHER BUSINESS & 14. CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING**

There was no other business and the next meeting was scheduled for 9 April 2001.