

SUMMARY OF MEETING OF 9 AUGUST 2002

OPENING OF MEETING, ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

Council met at Miranda on 9 August 2002. All members were present, except for Ms Kidziak (who participated by teleconference), and Mrs Fitch. The minutes of 12 April 2002 were confirmed without amendment.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The paper on the proposed ELF Survey has now been published in Radiation Protection in Australasia, the journal of the Australasian Radiation Protection Society, and ARPANSA has written to a range of organisations seeking support for the survey.

ARPANSA'S CORPORATE PLAN 2002-2005

The CEO briefed Council on ARPANSA's Corporate Plan for the next 3 years. Planning covered areas of health assessment of ionizing radiation, measurement and modelling of absorption of radiofrequency radiations, promoting the safe use of radiation in medicine through surveys, measurement and advice, development of the National Directory for Radiation Protection, communication, transparency and participation; and regulation, where the emphasis will change from licensing to inspection activities. Council noted the Corporate Plan, and agreed that Council priorities should also take account of the Plan.

COUNCIL RADIOACTIVE WASTE WORKING GROUP

Council reviewed the draft report and agreed to provide comment to the Secretariat within one month, so that a further draft could be prepared within two months and circulated for completion at the next Council meeting.

RISK COMMUNICATION – NRPB LESSONS LEARNED FROM UK INQUIRY INTO BSE & vCJD

Council discussed a number of papers arising from consideration in the UK of matters arising from handling of responses to the BSE and vCJD issue. In particular, it was noted that the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) had set up the Radiation, Risk and Society Advisory Group (R,RSAG) to help NRPB to improve the ways it hears public views and communicates with the public. Council agreed that it should establish a dialogue with R,RSAG to keep informed of their progress and learn from their experience in this area. Council also agreed that this item should remain a standing agenda item for some time while it is considered further.

PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE WORKING GROUP

Council considered the latest drafts of a longer discussion paper and a short paper providing advice to the CEO on precautionary approaches in radiation protection. In addition, comment from a number of other Government agencies on the paper was discussed. Council agreed that it should proceed to finalise and publish the longer paper, while making clear that the focus was on how precautionary approaches are applied in radiation protection, recognising that the approaches in other areas may be different. It was also recognised that the precautionary principle can be mis-used.

USE OF RADIATION IN 'PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE' WHOLE BODY CT SCANS & CARDIAC SCORING

Council considered the use of imaging techniques using radiation, such as whole body CT scans and cardiac calcium scoring on asymptomatic patients, and noted the positions of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists and the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand on these techniques. Council's view was that these were two clear examples where the ICRP principle of justification of radiation exposure needed to be applied rather than assumed. Council agreed that a letter be prepared for the CEO on the issue, and that Council should also write to the RANZCR and CSANZ supporting their stands and emphasising the need for justification of radiation exposures in future similar situations.

UPDATE ON INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGY

The Chair informed Council that following the letters sent jointly with CSANZ to all cardiologists in Australia to raise consciousness about radiation protection issues, there had been a recent discussion with CSANZ. There had been little feedback or questions to CSANZ so far. The next stage of the process, developing a questionnaire seeking information on practices and procedures was now under way.

COUNCIL – FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND AGENDA

As the current Council term of appointment expires in August 2002, and the Minister would make new appointments, Council discussed issues that would be relevant for consideration during the next triennium. The main points raised were:

- (a) how Council works with ARPANSA in setting risk frameworks;
- (b) radioactive waste issues;
- (c) advice related to regulatory decisions on a National Repository;
- (d) radiation and the environment;
- (e) uses of radiation in medicine;
- (f) implementing the commitment to keep abreast of developing science in non-ionizing radiation;
- (g) whether there was a need to review the approach to ultraviolet radiation protection; and
- (h) advising on the adequacy of the Act and the functioning of the Act and regulations.

Issues of how Council operates were also discussed. The community perception of ARPANSA's independence, transparency, accountability and resourcing were also discussed as possible areas of consideration.

REPORT ON DARWIN CONFERENCE ON PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT FROM IONIZING RADIATION

The International Symposium held in Darwin from 22-25 July 2002 had been well organised and highly successful. The conference discussion included the need for a practical system to demonstrate that protection of the environment is being achieved, and work towards developing a number of reference organisms. The development of a framework is reasonably advanced, there are various models that can be used or developed further, but data is lacking at present. It is hoped that work in these areas could be coordinated and funded by IAEA. A further conference was to be held in Stockholm next year. Arising from discussion on the conference, Council agreed to make the following recommendations to the CEO:

- (1) ARPANSA should take the lead in developing an Environmental Radiation Protection Program for Australia, and should seek to involve an international expert in formulating this program.
- (2) A first step should be a meeting between relevant senior staff of ARPANSA, the Supervising Scientist Division and ANSTO, to follow up on the Darwin Symposium and develop a strategic plan for the development of the program.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

The CEO reported on the following issues:

- (a) It had now been agreed that the process for seeking information on the strontium 90 fallout monitoring program should be through institutions that had provided bone samples. ARPANSA has supplied information to institutions and the States and returned samples to those institutions. There will be publicity inviting next of kin to contact institutions seeking information, should they wish to know if their relative had been involved in the program.
- (b) The licence conditions for the replacement reactor require approval of the CEO before the construction of any item important for safety. This is generating a substantial workload.
- (c) The draft Environmental Impact Statement for the National Radioactive Waste Repository has been issued for public comment.
- (d) ARPANSA is working with States and Territories to develop a strategy for dealing physical security of radiation sources.
- (e) ARPANSA now operated four Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty radionuclide monitoring stations in Melbourne, Townsville, Perth and Darwin, which have been certified by the CTBT organisation in Vienna. ARPANSA is also in the process of setting up a radionuclide laboratory to obtain certification to examine samples from other laboratories in the event of a relevant result being reported.
- (f) Lars-Erik Holm, head of the Swedish Radiation Protection Institute and chair of the ICRP Committee on the Environment, had visited ARPANSA's laboratories to conduct a short review of the scientific work being undertaken.

REPORT FROM THE RADIATION HEALTH COMMITTEE

RHC had met on 31 July and 1 August 2002, and RHC had now agreed that the *Recommendations for the Discharge of Patients Undergoing Treatment with Radioactive Substances* should be recommended to Council as suitable for publication. A letter would be sent to Standards Australia regarding their intention to publish a standard on Lasers in Entertainment where an existing RHC code was already in use. Both the *Code of Practice for Radiation Protection in Dentistry* and the *Code of Practice for the Safe Use of Radiation in Veterinary Science* were close to the public comment stage and regulatory impact statements were in preparation. The *Recommendations for Intervention in Emergency Situations involving Radiation Exposure* was also near release for public comment. In relation to the Australian Radiation Incidents Register, RHC members had undertaken to provide comment to the secretariat on the types of incidents to be reported. RHC also intended to write to AHMAC members and professional groups regarding incidents in nuclear medicine that result from using two different units for activity in some nuclear medicine departments. Council requested that it be provided with a copy of the RHC's priority list for review of codes at the next Council meeting.

REPORT FROM THE NUCLEAR SAFETY COMMITTEE

NSC had met on 12 July 2002. NSC had discussed future agenda issues and the type of expertise needed for the next triennium. A briefing on seismic issues had been provided,

and in addition, spent fuel processing in Argentina, solidification of waste, emergency planning, and reclassification of aircraft accidents from commercial-in-confidence to security-in-confidence were also discussed.

RHC AND NSC MEMBERSHIP

The CEO informed Council of his intention to extend the membership of RHC and NSC members until the end of 2002, to allow them to continue their business and avoid any hiatus that might otherwise occur should there be any delay in the appointment of the Council.

UPDATE ON ADOPTION OF TRANSPORT CODE IN AUSTRALIA

Council was informed of progress in adoption of the Transport Code by jurisdictions. ACT, WA, NSW and ARPANSA had now adopted the Code. Other jurisdictions were all in the process of adoption. Council requested a further report at its next meeting.

BRIEFING ON REACTOR FAULT ISSUES

The CEO briefed Council on seismic issues regarding the replacement reactor. ANSTO studies will be carried out to determine the age and size of the fault discovered during excavation. ARPANSA is preparing to assess the report, having engaged Geoscience Australia and an international expert through IAEA, to assist. The construction licence remains valid, however ANSTO require approval of the CEO before pouring foundations, or for an alternative site. The reports are expected to be available, along with a proposal from ANSTO, within the next few weeks.

FINAL APPROVAL OF PATIENT DISCHARGE RECOMMENDATIONS

Council was advised that the Radiation Health Committee had now recommended that the *Recommendations for the Discharge of Patients Undergoing Treatment with Radioactive Substances* be published. The draft had undergone a public comment phase, and the working group had reviewed the comment and made changes to the draft. There had been a further opportunity for a few key contributors of comment to assess whether their comment had been adequately addressed before the Recommendations were presented to RHC. Council agreed to advise the CEO to adopt the Recommendations.

CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 6 December 2002 at Yallambie. A post-meeting briefing was offered but no one attended.