

RADIATION HEALTH & SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of the meeting held on 10 December 1999

1 And 2 ATTENDANCE/APOLOGIES

All members attended and there were no apologies.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES AND WEBPAGE SUMMARY FOR THE MEETING OF 15 SEPTEMBER 1999

The minutes of the meeting of 15 September 1999 were adopted with two amendments. Council agreed that the webpage summary was satisfactory and should be included on the ARPANSA web site as soon as possible.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

4.1 Protocol for Networking for Local Government Representative on NSC

Council discussed the need to provide guidance for Dr Smith, as the member of the NSC *representing a local government or local administration of an area affected by a matter related to the safety of a controlled facility*, to allow him adequately to represent the views of more than one local administration. Dr Loy agreed to prepare some notes on this issue for discussion at NSC.

4.2 Proposed MOU with Standards Australia

Next agenda.

4.3 Openness/Confidentiality Issues

Council agreed that its policy should be for openness of its proceedings, while recognising that there will be legitimate arguments from time to time for confidentiality, for example in circumstances described in the exemptions under the FOI Act. Following discussion, Council agreed on the following statement of its policy regarding availability of minutes:

Council is disposed in principle to having public access to minutes.

It was agreed that a summary of the minutes of the meeting of 15 September 1999 be placed on the web site.

A short summary record of the meeting of 10 December 1999 will be produced soon after the meeting and agreed out of session as being suitable to be placed on the web site.

For the next Council meeting, legal advice will be obtained on liability for minutes/documents placed on the web site.

At the next meeting, discussion on the detail of how to make the minutes available will continue. This may include the style of minutes and web summaries to be produced, as well as methods to allow people to request copies.

In relation to documents from other organisations, it is their responsibility to make an argument that particular documents should not be made available. They would otherwise be treated as available.

4.4 Membership of RHC and NSC

Council noted the media release of 5 November 1999 detailing the appointments to the Radiation Health Committee and the Nuclear Safety Committee. It was also noted that there was still one vacancy on the Nuclear Safety Committee.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

5.1 Briefing from Environment Australia on Replacement Research Reactor

Mr Steve Mercer, of the Environment Assessment Branch of Environment Australia, provided the Council with an overview of the environmental recommendations arising from the EIS for the Replacement Research Reactor. The recommendations included:

Site Emissions: There be no increase in overall emissions.

Monitoring: Groundwater monitoring program be implemented, radiological site characterisation be undertaken, and review of current radiological monitoring program be undertaken.

Hazards & Risks: Preliminary Safety Analysis Report (PSAR) to be subject to peer review, assumptions/parameters in EIS to be incorporated into final design, PSAR must demonstrate exclusion of certain design events.

Community involvement: Independent review of emergency plans, including public input. Program for ongoing community consultation and information, Community Right to Know Charter, public reporting on compliance with recommendations and ANSTO commitments and undertakings.

Discussion on Mr Mercer's presentation included clarifying how ARPANSA's licensing process related to the Ministerial approval process described.

5.2 Briefing from ANSTO on Replacement Research Reactor

Professor Helen Garnett, CEO of ANSTO, provided a briefing to Council on the operations of ANSTO and the Replacement Research Reactor project. The presentation included:

Phase 1 for the replacement reactor covers from the Government decision to the tender process, which commenced in September 1997. The Draft EIS was issued in August 1998, and Final EIS in January 1999. Pre-qualification of tenderers was completed December 1998. The site licence

application was submitted in April 1999. The Public Works Committee process was completed 26 August 1999. The Tender Documentation was finalised 27 August 1999.

Phase 2 covers the awarding of the contract, from issue of the Request For Tenders in August 1999. Close of Tenders is to be January 2000.

Phase 3 Construction. Design and Construction is from 2000-2005. Completion of commissioning is to take place by end 2005. Shutdown of HIFAR will also take place.

The following steps require ARPANSA agreement

- Preliminary Safety Analysis Report (from November 2000).
- Construction Authorisation (from April 2002)
- Reactor commissioning (April to October 2005)
- Final SAR (by October 2005)
- Operating Authorisation (October 2005)
- Permanent shutdown of HIFAR (30 December 2005)

In discussion the following points were made:

- Although the seismic study has not been completed, its impact has been anticipated in the costing
- Decommissioning of HIFAR is a separate project including a plan, agreement as a safe process, procedures (eg taking out heavy water), quiescent for 30 years, documented by 2005, and requiring a licence to decommission

5.3 Briefing on EMR standard

The process followed by Standards Australia had ceased when their Committee failed to reach agreement on a standard for Australia. ARPANSA had agreed to develop a standard for Australia via an expert working group of the Radiation Health Committee. The working group proposed included 5 scientific/medical experts, 2 nominees from community groups, 2 people with industry experience, and 2 medical consultants to the working group, with a chair and secretariat provided by ARPANSA. Council members were requested to advise of any comments on the proposed working party as soon as possible. *Note: The Chair subsequently agreed that Dr Dickie would act as Council observer on the working party.*

5.4 Report from Radiation Health Committee

As Chair of RHC, Mrs Fitch reported on the RHC meeting. RHC had met on 23 & 24 November 1999 at Yallambie. A proposed plan for publication development was discussed. Council was provided with a copy of the proposal, which recommended publishing three types of documents, Standards, Codes of Practice and Safety Guides.

RHC recommended that the former Transport Competent Authorities Working Group be re-formed to provide a forum to resolve jurisdictional and implementation issues in the transport of radioactive materials. RHC had also agreed that current arrangements allowing the import of gas mantles containing small quantities of thorium be continued and reviewed in a year.

5.5 Council Advice on RHC Priorities

Council supported the priorities proposed by RHC, noting the workload implications of the large program being undertaken. Council also noted the importance of being aware of international developments (eg IAEA) and the need to review new information as it became available.

5.6 Report from Nuclear Safety Committee

Ms Kidziak, Chair of NSC, reported that the NSC was due to hold its first meeting on 13 December 1999, and would need to examine its terms of reference, agenda, its role and how to do business, and its priorities. Coordination with RHC would be important, particularly in areas of waste management, which appeared to be the area for greatest overlap between the committees. The transport code also involved some issues for NSC.

5.7 Council Advice on NSC Priorities

Council noted that the replacement reactor and the National Radioactive Waste Repository were high priority issues. Waste management issues were becoming more important as the National Repository proposal continues, and need for guidance on possible co-location of an intermediate level waste store would also arise.

5.8 Report on Tokaimura, Japan Radiation Accident

Mr Daniel Westall of ARPANSA's Regulatory Branch attended the meeting to provide a briefing on the Tokaimura accident.

5.9 Reports from Members on Possible Project Areas

The Australian Radiation Incidents Register, uniformity of radiation controls, the National Radioactive Waste Repository, and the medical uses of radiation were all regarded as important areas that Council would need to consider. Council also noted that further background information on issues such as the National Radioactive Waste Repository and Maralinga would be required.

Council also discussed the Kaldor Report (Report to the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence on Recent Studies of Nuclear Test Veterans, July 1999) and noted that there had been Ministerial correspondence suggesting that ARPANSA and the Council were appropriate bodies to form the "clearing house" referred to in the Kaldor recommendations.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 ARPANSA's Role in Approving Transport of Spent Fuel Rods

Council noted a report by Mr Trevor Mountford-Smith of ARPANSA's Regulatory Branch.

6.2 Media Release (Senator Minchin) - National Radioactive Waste Repository

A Media Release from Senator Nick Minchin (22 October 1999) titled *Regional Consultation on Radioactive Waste Repository* was tabled.

6.3 Senate Inquiry into Electromagnetic Radiation

Council noted that a Senate committee is to have an inquiry into electromagnetic radiation, including the Commonwealth's research funding, reviewing Australian and overseas research,

examining the Australian Interim Standard, examining the efforts to set an Australian Standard, and examining the merits of the transfer of responsibility for setting a new standard to ARPANSA.

6.4 Conference Report from CEO - “Bridging Radiation Policy and Science”

Dr Loy reported on a conference he had attended in the USA “Bridging Radiation Policy and Science”. Mrs Fitch and Prof Garnett (ANSTO) had also attended. The aims of the conference were to examine how policy should be formed given the uncertainty on the health effects of low level radiation, and to examine the application of current radiation policy – particularly to decommissioning and clean-up. The proceedings of the conference were expected to be published early next year.

7. CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING

A tentative date of 14 April 2000 was set for the next meeting to be held at ARPANSA’s Melbourne office at Yallambie.