



RADIATION HEALTH & SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of the meeting held on 15 September 1999

1. OPENING OF MEETING AND ATTENDANCE

Dr McLean opened the meeting at 9:30am and welcomed all members to the first meeting of the Radiation Health & Safety Advisory Council.

Members: Dr Rick McLean (Chair), Dr John Loy, Dr Nick de Klerk, Dr Lorraine Robb, Mr Peter Raue, Ms Sylvia Kidziak, Dr Richard Smart, Mrs Jill Fitch, Mr Howard Ackland, Dr Garry Smith, Dr Graeme Dickie

Secretariat: Mr Alan Melbourne

Observer: Dr Ches Mason (ARPANSA)

Dr McLean advised that there was still one position on Council to which no appointment had been made at present. It was anticipated that this position would be filled by someone with a broad environmental background and would be finalised within the next couple of months. Dr McLean also noted that Howard Ackland had advised of his resignation from the NSW EPA Radiation Control Branch, and would therefore be resigning his position as one of the Radiation Control Officers on Council.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Council discussed what type of interests may need to be declared. Dr Loy asked members to consider whether they had any interests that should be declared and advise the secretariat as appropriate.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Dr McLean summarised the functions given to Council in the ARPANS Act. In discussion on the terms of reference, he noted that the functions were written before the Council was formed, were fairly broad, and did not represent any major restriction on matters that Council could consider. Dr Loy added that he was required to report to Parliament on Council operations and clarified that it was intended that Council's reports to the CEO would be included in the CEO's report to Parliament. Council agreed that an important issue to be resolved was the relationship between the Council and Committees.

4. ARPANSA ACTIVITIES

Dr Loy provided background to the formation of ARPANSA, which was formed by amalgamating the Nuclear Safety Bureau (NSB) and the Australian Radiation Laboratory (ARL).

ARPANSA had both a regulatory and scientific role.

The regulatory role is established under the Act, which requires that Commonwealth entities must hold a licence to use sources and operate nuclear facilities. Such a requirement is new for the Commonwealth. A 6 month period was allowed for entities to make application. ARPANSA's regulatory branch is currently dealing with applications. The replacement reactor EIS and Parliamentary processes are going on. ANSTO has applied for a licence to prepare a site. Dr Loy advised that he is proposing to make a decision on the licence application within the next 1-2 weeks.

The science role of ARPANSA involves being able to measure radiation with precision, and having a deep understanding of radiation doses and measurements. ARPANSA does not have expertise in the biological sciences. The three scientific branches are *Environmental & Radiation Health Branch*, *Medical Radiation Branch*, and *Non-ionizing Radiation Branch*.

In response to questions from Council members, Dr Loy indicated that:

- ARPANSA's priorities for the next few years included the Replacement Reactor, tasks arising from the wind-down of Maralinga, and the National Radioactive Waste Repository.
- ARPANSA has been recruiting staff into the regulatory and Council/Committee support areas. The full complement of ARPANSA staff is 105-110, which Dr Loy hoped would be maintained, but did not expect to be increased.
- That the Sydney and Melbourne offices would be maintained.
- That when the legislation was debated in the Senate, some amendments were made, but the existence and role of ARPANSA was supported.
- ARPANSA interacted with non-Commonwealth bodies in both its regulatory and advisory roles. There was interaction through the development of standards, codes that all States/Territories use, and also through promoting uniformity with the States and Territories.
- ARPANSA does have a major monitoring service, and also provides services in measuring radiation and calibration of equipment. ARPANSA will be looking for opportunities to expand its services.
- ARPANSA funding came from three sources:
 - *Appropriation* (basically from ARL & NSB)
 - *Regulatory charges*
 - *Services*

5. GENERAL ROLE OF COUNCIL

Council would need to consider its interface with other bodies eg CSIRO, Defence, ANSTO, NHMRC, ISR (the proponent of the National Radioactive Waste Repository) and its relationships with Radiation Health Committee, Nuclear Safety Committee, State Governments, industry bodies, environment and community organisations.

Dr Loy made a presentation to Council including the proposed mechanism for development of codes and standards and the uniformity process recently agreed by Ministers. Council also discussed how ARPANSA Codes would relate to Australian Standards and agreed that there was a need to establish a memorandum of understanding with Standards Australia as a high priority.

6. IDENTIFICATION OF AREAS FOR COUNCIL ADVICE

Dr McLean noted that in general Council would provide advice to the public and other bodies about radiation. Council would therefore need to let other bodies know of its existence and role.

Issues discussed included:

- Environment protection processes are not well defined and need to be developed.
- Public confidence needs to be established.

(The Minister for Health and Aged Care, Dr Michael Wooldridge, joined the meeting and was introduced to all members.)

- The need for a relationship with Standards Australia and the need to avoid regulatory difficulties as a result of using standards.
- The need for a high level of uniformity in how the standards and codes are developed.
- That it was important to maintain public confidence regarding environment protection and pollution issues.
- That medical exposure needs to be examined, as it is a major source of public exposure, and there is a wide variation of dose for the same procedure between centres.
- That in radiation oncology the issue is uniform calibration between facilities.
- The importance of establishing relationships with other bodies to avoid overlap in business.
- That risk communication was an important issue for Council.
- The need and opportunity to incorporate world best practice in the standards and codes adopted by Council.
- That there may be a need for inter-ministerial involvement for example on environment issues. Involvement of the States in particular will be necessary.

The Minister commented the ARPANS Act got through Parliament unanimously with universal support for what ARPANSA was established to do. He asked for the Council's common sense, hard work and inspiration as it conducted its business.

The Minister said that it was important that the Council focus on things in the public mind, such as the ANSTO replacement reactor and the national radioactive waste repository. He agreed with the other priorities members had identified and was happy to take Council advice. The Minister then thanked the Council and left the meeting to attend to other commitments.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS

7.1 Role And Membership Of Radiation Health Committee

It was noted that discussions about Committee membership should remain confidential. A paper presenting options for membership was tabled.

The Act specified that RHC include a senior radiation control officer from each State and Territory, the CEO, a public representative, a Nuclear Safety Committee representative, and two other members. Council noted that the State positions were largely fixed, and discussed options for the remaining 4 positions on RHC.

Council discussed how the Committee would operate to develop documents, eg via sub-groups, the need for additional experience to develop documents, the division between RHC and NSC, and the Council role in directing issues to RHC or NSC.

7.2 Role And Membership Of Nuclear Safety Committee

A paper presenting options for membership was tabled.

The Act specified the membership as a local government representative, the CEO, a public representative, an RHC representative, and up to 8 others. Dr McLean noted that the proposed “other” members provided a good mix of expertise.

Membership, including the possibility of an emergency response person, such as a fire brigade HAZMAT officer, was discussed. Council noted that an expert in human factors in accidents had been proposed.

Council discussed a range of issues that would need to be considered in relation to the operation of both Committees. These included expertise, working arrangements, guidelines for document preparation and relationships with other bodies, including the Council.

The immediate tasks of the NSC included the siting criteria assessment procedures developed by ARPANSA. NSC generally would need to review documents developed in-house by ARPANSA, whereas RHC will be reviewing documents produced by expert groups from a variety of sources.

Issues regarding the local government representative on NSC were also discussed. Dr Loy offered that ARPANSA would draft a paper on this issue.

The level of support available to the Council was also discussed. Dr Loy advised that there would be direct support from the secretariat in Council matters. The secretariat would also lead in the development of codes and standards. There would also be additional support in that the Council would be able to tap into other expertise from Yallambie and Miranda.

Dr Loy advised that if Council members wanted to make additional suggestions about Committee membership they could do so by email or phone.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

8.1 Meeting Schedule

Dr McLean advised that he expected that there would be 4-6 meetings of Council in the first year, with less after that. It was determined that the next meeting would be a full day meeting on 10 December 1999 at ARPANSA’s Miranda office. Dr Loy indicated that it was his intention to appoint the Committees so that they would be able to meet before Council next meets. Dr McLean expected that the Council would normally meet in Sydney, but that there would be some meetings in Melbourne.

8.2 Communication between meetings

The secretariat would act as a focus for communication between meetings. Email would be used as far as possible. Members were asked to note that the secretariat now had a new fax machine direct into the secretariat work area. This number should be used in preference to the ARPANSA general fax number.

8.3 Reimbursement

Correspondence regarding appointments had detailed sitting fees and travel allowance, except that government officers were not eligible for sitting fees. Members were asked to provide their details for direct credit to the secretariat to enable payments to be arranged.

8.4 Budget Available

The budget available for Council will provide support for travel etc for working parties, but not salaries. There will be funding for high priority needs.

8.5 Secretarial and other backup available

This item had been discussed earlier in the meeting. The Secretary was asked to circulate the contact details for all members with the draft minutes.

8.6 *Reporting mechanisms*

Dr Loy advised that the CEO was required to report to the Parliament both quarterly and annually. He proposed that a draft would be prepared and then Council and Committees asked to agree before reports were finalised. Formal reports of Council would be separately published.

8.7 *Council page on ARPANSA website*

Council agreed that it would be useful to include information on the website. The Secretary was asked to prepare a draft summary of the minutes for the website.

8.8 *Confidentiality Issues*

Dr Loy indicated that it would be up to Council to devise rules, but that a lead could be taken from the types of exemptions under the FOI Act. In general, Council business should be open, but there may be specific instances where confidentiality may be an issue, eg discussion of individuals for membership of Committees. Council would also need to be sensitive to commercial-in-confidence issues. Dr Loy will prepare a paper on this topic for Council agreement. Council applauded that openness is the approach and noted that openness leads to public confidence in the process.

9. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA

The following suggestions were made for the agenda of next meeting:

- Someone from Environment Australia (group that conducted the assessment of the EIS) to attend to provide a high level overview briefing on the replacement reactor issue.
- Prioritising the work to be undertaken by the RHC and NSC.
- That the environment issue be placed on the agenda for early next year.
- National Radioactive Waste Repository briefing.
- Briefing on the RF standard.

10. CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

Dr McLean summarised the meeting as follows:

- There was a need for openness in operations to ensure public credibility.
- There was a need to be seen to be addressing the high profile issues.
- The Council has a separate role from that of RHC and NSC but will need to direct Committee priorities.
- By email between meetings details of the Council composition would be circulated. Members should provide a one paragraph biographical summary to the secretariat along with a jpeg computer file photograph if possible.
- Finalisation of the membership of the Committees would also occur between meetings.
- Dr McLean requested that the agenda be forwarded one month prior to the meeting to enable members to make any additional suggestions.

11. CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING

The meeting was closed at 12:40pm.

The next meeting was scheduled for 10 December 1999 at ARPANSA's Miranda office.