

SUMMARY OF MEETING OF 15 NOVEMBER 2002

1 OPENING OF MEETING, ATTENDANCE, CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES & BUSINESS ARISING

Council met at ARPANSA's Melbourne office on 15 November 2002. All members were present except for Prof R Smart. The minutes were confirmed with one editorial amendment. The Council statement on preventative medicine issues that was agreed at the last meeting was now on the ARPANSA web site.

Ms Kidziak welcomed all members to the new triennium for Council. In particular, Prof Lowe and Dr Jezukaitis were welcomed as new members of Council.

2 ISSUES FROM LAST TRIENNIUM

2.1 Radioactive Waste Working Group

Council discussed approaches to complete the advice on radioactive waste issues requested by the CEO during the last triennium of Council. Council decided that it would take considerable work to review and verify the accuracy all of the information included in the draft report tabled at the August meeting. Rather than complete this report Council agreed to develop a short paper to the CEO, using a revised version of the recommendations of the earlier draft. The Chair and Secretariat would draft a paper, including recommendations, the reason for the recommendations, and an introductory section, and seek Council members' agreement by mid-December.

2.2 Precautionary Principle Working Group

Council noted that comment had recently been received from the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and from the Therapeutic Goods Administration. A response from Environment Australia was still awaited. Council agreed that, subject to editorial corrections provided at the meeting, the shorter paper should be forwarded to the CEO as Council advice on this issue. Council would use the longer paper as a reference when precautionary approaches were discussed in future.

2.3 Use of Radiation in Preventative Medicine

Council noted that letters had been sent to the CEO, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists, and the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand, giving Council's views on this issue. The CEO had arranged for Council's advice to be placed on the ARPANSA web site, but responses from the other organisations had not been received as yet. Council would be kept informed of developments in this area.

2.4 Interventional Cardiology

Council was informed that letters, jointly signed by the Chair of Council and the Cardiac Society, had been sent to all cardiology centres in Australia some months ago to raise awareness of radiation protection issues.

As a follow on from this letter, a questionnaire had been developed to seek information on current practices and procedures in relation to radiation protection. This questionnaire would be trialled at a few centres, before being refined and sent to all centres in Australia. Council requested to be kept informed of progress.

2.5 Risk Communication

Council was informed that a short reply to its letter to the Radiation, Risk and Society Advisory Group in the UK had been received, and that a more detailed response was expected. Council requested that this issue remain on future agendas.

3 DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW SYSTEM OF RADIATION PROTECTION

Council was informed of progress towards the development of a new system of radiation protection by the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP). The present system of radiation protection, and some of the issues being considered by ICRP were described. It was noted that the proposed change did not arise from changes to risk estimates or dosimetry, as had been the case with earlier ICRP revisions, but from the desire to simplify radiation protection philosophy. Council requested to be kept informed of developments.

4 ARPANSA'S ROLE IN NON-IONIZING RADIATION

The structure and activities of the NIR Branch were described to Council. The Branch has a role in contributing to the development of national codes and standards, both via RHC and via Standards Australia, and the contribution to international standards, through a range of international bodies. Information and fact sheets on a range of NIR issues, including mobile phones, mobile phone base stations, microwave ovens, powerlines, solar UV, sun-protective clothing, sunglasses, sunscreens, and UV protection are provided. NIR Branch also respond to the many enquiries ARPANSA receives on NIR issues. The NIR Branch also provides a range of services, including calibration of equipment for UV, ELF and RF measurement (which is NATA accredited), field surveys, equipment testing, UPF testing of sun protective clothing, sunglass testing, UVR hazard assessments, UVR calibrations and UVR protection provided by materials. A number of UV and EMR research activities are also conducted, including monitoring projects undertaken jointly with other organisations. The NIR Branch has also developed a proposal for a national survey of ELF magnetic field levels in homes. Council was informed that the NIR Branch had discontinued laser service work, and was winding down lasers standards and protection work.

5 COUNCIL – FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND AGENDA

Council discussed issues that should be considered during the next triennium, noting the points that had been recorded in the minutes of last meeting. It was noted that issues should have relevance to the ARPANSA Corporate Plan. A range of issues in both ionizing and non-ionizing radiation were identified. Council will develop more detail and the priorities of these issues after further consideration by members. Council agreed that a presentation on emergency response arrangements should be included on the April 2003 agenda. Council also requested presentations on RHC publications at the public comment stage, to inform of the issues before Council is requested to advise on adoption of the publication.

6 MEMBERSHIP OF RHC & NSC

The CEO informed Council of the process for appointments to Radiation Health Committee (RHC) and Nuclear Safety Committee (NSC). The ARPANS Act provides that the CEO must consult Council before appointing a person to either Committee. Council was informed of the proposed RHC appointments and acknowledged that it had been consulted. In the case of the NSC, nominations for some positions on NSC were still awaited. The CEO advised that he would consult Council on the membership of NSC out of session.

7 REPORT FROM THE CEO

The CEO reported that the licence conditions for the Replacement Research Reactor required authorisation of the CEO for the construction of each individual item important for safety. This workload would continue into early next year.

In the environmental area, background and baseline monitoring had been undertaken around Lucas Heights, using a vehicle mounted automated system. The results of this survey were now on the ARPANSA web site. In relation to Maralinga, the dose assessment had now been given to DEST for publication with the Maralinga Technical Advisory Committee report. The conservatively estimated doses which would be received by a permanent occupant of the land were less than 1 millisievert per year outside the "restricted land-use" zone. These doses were calculated for the very dusty, outstation Aboriginal lifestyle, and for the observed levels of contamination averaged over realistic areas.

Records and samples arising from the historical program to assess Sr-90 uptake from fallout had now been returned to institutions for them to use in dealing with any enquiries.

A working group of ARPANSA and State/Territory regulators was developing proposals on security of sources. Council would be given a report on this issue as the proposals developed.

ARPANSA had also discussed the future work of the Ionizing Radiation Standards Section (IRS), which provides a calibration service, and maintains the Australian Standards for Exposure and Absorbed Dose, as well as maintaining a linear accelerator.

8 COMMITTEE REPORTS

8.1 Report from the Radiation Health Committee (RHC)

Council was provided with the summary of the August meeting of RHC and the agenda for the 20-21 November meeting, and a copy of the priorities established by RHC for its publication program. Council was also informed of the current status of the RHC publication program, outlining the different levels of publication being produced, the regulatory impact process required to meet the Council of Australian Governments' Guidelines, the current status of all drafts in progress, and the Council's role in the adoption of publications.

Council noted the importance of completing the Mining Code, and a new issue in veterinary radiography involving a large number of radiographs being required for yearling sales of horses. Council agreed to send a letter to RHC informing of the issue so that it

could be taken into account in drafting the Veterinary Code, and for the information of regulators.

8.2 Report from the Nuclear Safety Committee (NSC)

Council was provided with a copy of the report on the extraordinary meeting of NSC held at ANSTO to provide members with a briefing on the geological fault issue, and enable members to see the site first hand.

9 OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Update on Adoption of 2001 Transport Code in Australia

Mr Melbourne informed Council that since the last meeting Tasmania had now adopted the Code. This left South Australia, Queensland, Northern Territory and Victoria, where in each case arrangements to adopt the code were in progress. Council would be kept informed of progress in these jurisdictions.

9.2 Briefing on Reactor Fault Line Issues

The CEO advised Council that he had now made a decision in relation to the geological faults discovered during excavations for the replacement research reactor. The faults occurred in an iron-bearing layer arising from weathering. The issues had been how old the iron-bearing layer was, whether it pre-dated the faulting, and how long since the faulting had moved. The iron-bearing layer had been aged at 9 ± 4 million years, using information on the Earth's magnetic field through the ages. In the context of regional geology, the movement of the faults was much older, probably about 80 million years. Hence, the likelihood of movement in the 50 year lifetime of the replacement reactor is vanishingly small.

9.3 ARPANSA's Role in Promoting Uniformity, and the National Competition Policy Review of Radiation Protection Legislation

Council was briefed on the development of the National Directory for Radiation Protection, which had been agreed by Ministers in 1999 as the approach to improving uniformity. A draft Directory is to be released as a discussion paper for public comment shortly. A regulatory impact statement (RIS) is also being developed and the draft Directory will be released with the RIS when the RIS has been cleared by the Office of Regulation Review.

A National Competition Policy Review of Radiation Protection Legislation had also been completed, and implementation of the recommendations was proceeding. The Implementation plan included 12 projects, the completion of which will address all of the recommendations of the Review. Deadlines for the projects range from December 2002 to June 2004. Copies of the implementation plan, including the projects, will be circulated to Council members out of session.

10 CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for **4 April 2003 at ARPANSA's Sydney office.**