



SUMMARY OF MEETING OF 28 NOVEMBER 2003

OPENING OF MEETING, ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES & CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Council met at the Stamford Hotel, Sydney Airport on 28 November 2003. The Hon TrishWorth MP, Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister for Health, attended for the Security of Sources item.

All members were present except for Dr Peter Jezukaitis. The minutes were confirmed without amendment.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The CEO informed Council that the first review meeting of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management had been held in Vienna in early November 2003. A summary of the meeting was available on the IAEA web site. Council noted progress of committee working groups responding to Council recommendations on radioactive waste, and that reports to the committees were expected at the first meetings in 2004.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION PAPER ON NORM

Presentation on NORM in tantalum industry

Mr Kevin O'Keefe, Group Metallurgist, Sons of Gwalia, addressed Council regarding NORM issues in the tantalum industry. Mr O'Keefe described the industry and made the points that occupational exposures are well controlled, but there are perception issues which have no proper foundation in radiation protection. Industry also had concerns that these perceptions, which cause shipping and customer issues, may be exacerbated by increasing regulation with lower trigger levels.

Consultant's report on NORM quantities

Dr Malcolm Cooper, EnviroRad Services Pty Ltd, briefed the Council on his consultant's report *NORM in Australian Industries – Review of Current Inventories*. The report covered quantities of waste generated in mining and mineral processing, downstream processing of minerals, fossil fuels, metal smelting, industrial minerals and water treatment and purification. Dr Cooper also indicated that in his view three NORM issues requiring attention were the need for uniform criteria for NORM disposal by landfill or land-spreading, restrictions on the future use of NORM wastes, and dealing with historically generated NORM waste.

Draft Discussion Paper

The Chair introduced the discussion by reminding Council that the terms of reference for the discussion paper were that it should not try to solve the problem, but should identify the industries involved, identify the quantities of NORM waste generated, discuss the current regulatory position and trade issues, discuss issues and options for dealing with NORM waste, and discuss NORM issues in commodities.

Council agreed that the discussion paper is to be directed to the informed/interested public, industry & decision-makers – ie should be high level but not for specialists. Council agreed to a number of other editorial changes and that the next draft for comment should be prepared by the end of January. Council reaffirmed the timeline for advice to the CEO following the April 2004 council meeting with a public discussion paper available by mid 2004.

SECURITY OF RADIOACTIVE SOURCES

The Hon. Trish Worth MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, and her Chief of Staff Dr Sue Whicker, attended the meeting for this item. The chair welcomed the Parliamentary Secretary and summarized Council's recent work emphasizing the importance of the discussion on both safety and health aspects of the security of sources.

IAEA Code of Conduct on Security of sources

Mr Steve McIntosh of ANSTO addressed the Council on the development of the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Sources. Mr McIntosh had chaired the IAEA working group that developed the Code. A Code had been developed in 2000, however, post 11 September 2001 the Code was revised to place more emphasis on preventing the acquisition of sources for malevolent purposes. This revised Code was endorsed by the IAEA Board of Governors and General Conference in September 2003 and included provisions for national registries, export controls, strengthened security requirements and confidentiality. The General Conference also adopted a resolution urging each country to write to the IAEA Director-General advising that it is working toward following the guidance contained in the IAEA Code. Members emphasized the need for national uniformity in approach to handling of sources.

The Parliamentary Secretary requested a summary of Council's discussion.

Australian actions on security of sources

Mr Peter Colgan, Manager, Sources and Facilities Section, Regulatory Branch, ARPANSA addressed the Council on the approach being taken in Australia to security of radioactive sources. He advised that a paper outlining an Australian strategy was agreed by the Radiation Health Committee in November 2002. It considered various possible terrorist uses of a radioactive source. The strategy uses the IAEA system to categorise sources, recognising that Australia employs thousands of sources in the three categories of sources with the greatest potential to cause harm if not under control. Sources are grouped according to security considerations, and performance objectives and security measures are established for each security group. Council noted that security of sources should be a priority issue. Implementation of the strategy was a resource issue that depended on the local environment. Inspection and follow-up is also resource intensive process.

REPLACEMENT REACTOR – CURRENT STATUS

The CEO tabled a report on the resolution of issues concerning errors in fabrication of the reactor pool liner and the regulatory decisions that followed. A number of additional licence conditions had been applied. Examination of Requests for Approval for construction of items important for safety was continuing satisfactorily. The contract for the manufacture of the uranium silicide fuel was expected within the next few months. Civil works were proceeding and Council was shown photographs of progress in

construction. Planning for dealing with an application for commissioning and operation of the reactor has now commenced.

NATIONAL RADIOACTIVE WASTE REPOSITORY – CURRENT STATUS

The CEO tabled a status report on the application from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) to site, construct and operate the National Radioactive Waste Repository. A public submission process was started, and following preliminary assessment of the application by ARPANSA, DEST was asked to provide further information to clarify and supplement its application. An international peer review of the application is now to be undertaken in late January 2004. A public forum is also proposed to be held.

INDICATOR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mrs Fitch informed Council of the IAEA development of an indicator of sustainable development (ISD) for the management of radioactive waste. The ISD is a dimensionless number that depends on progress towards safe storage or disposal. It included a 'form factor' indicating the suitability of the waste for storage or its endpoint, and an 'endpoint factor' indicating the status of the waste relative to its endpoint. Sustainability was defined as the point at which the amount of radioactive waste awaiting its endpoint is not increasing, the waste is in the final form required for its endpoint and it is being safely stored. Council thought that while this definition may not represent true sustainable development, it was a good approach that improved on other existing systems, and could be used to measure Australia's progress. Council agreed that it would prepare a 2 page advice to the CEO about the document and its application to Australia. A draft would be circulated for members' comment in February.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

The CEO tabled a report describing a number of overseas visits undertaken during September and October. MOUs on cooperation have been signed with the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the South African regulator. Waste repositories at Yucca Mountain, in Utah and Sweden were visited. Argonne Laboratory, Chicago was visited to learn about progress and policy on qualification of U-Mo fuels. Security discussions relating to the replacement research reactor had been held with the US Department of Energy. The CEO had also attended an international conference on protection of the environment in Stockholm, the general conference of the IAEA in Vienna, and had chaired a meeting of the IAEA working group developing a Code of Conduct on the Safety of Research Reactors. ARPANSA is also proceeding with other projects. Measurements for a survey of radiofrequency emissions from 60 mobile phone base stations have been completed and analysis is underway. Plans for an ELF survey in Victoria are still being pursued.

Report from the Radiation Health Committee

A summary report of the RHC meeting of 12-13 November 2003 was tabled. A major item of discussion had been the intervention recommendations, and in particular iodine prophylaxis issues. An ARPANSA technical report on iodine risks, prophylaxis and related issues was to be released with the next draft of the recommendations.

Report from the Nuclear Safety Committee

A summary report of the Nuclear Safety Committee meeting of 20 October 2003 was tabled. The NSC had received presentations from ANSTO on decommissioning of HIFAR and on molybdenum production.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair informed Council that she had attended the 12th International Conference on Radiation Research in Brisbane, which had an emphasis on the biological basis of radiation protection. Mrs Fitch informed Council that this would be her last meeting pending retirement. The Chair thanked Mrs Fitch on behalf of Council for her valuable contribution.

Interventional Cardiology Questionnaire

Progress in finalising the questionnaire had been slow, however recent emails from the Cardiac Society were positive and it was hoped that following comment it could be finalised soon.

Progress on the National Directory for Radiation Protection

A report on progress in developing the National Directory was discussed. A schedule specifying agreed competencies and licence pre-requisites for 5 professions had been developed. Council suggested that requirements for radiation therapists should be included in this draft. The draft Directory and a regulatory impact statement are expected to be released for public comment in 2004.

CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 2 April 2004 in Sydney.