

SUMMARY OF MEETING OF 30 NOVEMBER 2001

1 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES & CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Council met at ARPANSA's Yallambie office on 30 November 2001. All members were present, except for Ms Kidziak (who participated by phone for items 8-13) and Dr Robb: Mr Simon Critchley, chair of the radiation Health Committee (RHC) attended as an observer, and Dr Andrew Wood, member of RHC and the Radiofrequency working group attended for item 7 only.

The minutes of the 3 August 2001 meeting were confirmed without alteration.

2 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Council noted that for air transport the new IAEA regulations had been implemented on 1 July 2001 by adoption of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) regulations which in turn adopt IAEA requirements. For sea transport the mechanism was adoption under Marine Orders of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code (IMDG Code), which in turn adopts IAEA requirements. Confirmation was being sought as to when this would come into effect.

Council requested an update on implementation of the Transport Code by all jurisdictions for its next meeting.

Council was advised that the ELF Survey proposal was being revised. Council requested a progress report for next meeting.

3 COUNCIL RADIOACTIVE WASTE WORKING GROUP

Council discussed a draft report in detail, and a range of editorial issues and clarifications were raised. A further draft is to be prepared out of session, taking into account the issues raised. In particular, the need for recommendations in each section is to be considered by the working group.

The next draft is to be ready for circulation to Council members by the end of February in order to be considered at the next Council meeting.

4 PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE WORKING GROUP

A short draft paper on precautionary approaches in radiation protection was tabled for consideration as Council advice to the CEO. Council provided some editorial suggestions and agreed that a further version of this paper should be prepared.

In regard to the longer paper, Council felt that it should be circulated to other agencies, such as TGA, ANZFA, and the Office of the Gene Technology regulator to advise them of Council's interest and seek their comment. The paper could then be published in an appropriate journal.

5 RADIOFREQUENCY STANDARD – APPROVAL OF FINAL STANDARD

The CEO discussed the report tabled to brief Council on the process undertaken to develop the draft RF Standard. This included the former Standards Australia process, the establishment of the working group and its meetings, public consultation, the differences with the former standard and with ICNIRP Guidelines, the key issues arising in working group discussions, the RHC process, the letters from working group members to RHC, and the regulatory impact statement (RIS) process. Dr Wood noted that all of the Standards are based on 4 W/kg, above which there may be concern. The differences arise in how to estimate local heating, even with a plane wave, and that there is now a clearer understanding of how SAR distribution in the body takes place. The reference levels at some frequencies are now stricter than they were in the old standard, in some cases up to 10 times stricter. The reference levels did increase above about 450 MHz – this reflected understanding of field coupling and had not been taken account of in the old standard. Reference levels were simpler to measure and confirm compliance, whereas the basic restrictions were the actual limits, but were expressed in quantities that were often difficult to measure directly.

Council suggested that as the Standard was a technical document, but of substantial public interest, there was a need for a plain language guide describing the changes and their rationale to accompany the Standard. It was also noted that the RIS process had not been finalised and that Council would want to be satisfied that comment had been adequately addressed.

Council requested that the completed RIS report and the plain language guide be considered by the Council before a recommendation was made to the CEO.

6 SECURITY AND PHYSICAL PROTECTION OF NUCLEAR FACILITIES AND RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS

Prior to September 11, international security focus had been on nuclear materials as related to weapons making, and the international convention relates to movements of nuclear materials. The Australian Safeguards and Non-proliferation Office (ASNO) regulates ANSTO in relation to physical protection issues. There is a memorandum of understanding between ASNO and ARPANSA. Post September 11, ANSTO is to undertake a review of security issues and consequences, including the crashing of a large commercial aircraft. This will be reviewed by ARPANSA and made available to security agencies and ASNO.

7 PROGRESS REPORT ON CONSTRUCTION LICENCE APPLICATION FOR REPLACEMENT RESEARCH REACTOR

A paper on the issues for the second round of public submissions was tabled. The process for consideration of the construction licence application is as follows:

On receipt of the application, a summary of the Preliminary Safety Assessment Report (PSAR) had been placed on the ARPANSA web site and made available on CD. There had been a round of public submissions. Issues such as accident analysis, seismic design, and spent fuel were being considered. A public forum would be held on 14 and 17 December 2001. A panel is being formed to assist the CEO in running the forum. The second round of public submissions closes on 21 December 2001. NSC is to report by the end of January. The Safety Evaluation Report is to be prepared by ARPANSA's Regulatory Branch during January. During February, the CEO would draw together the available information and consider whether he can make a decision on the licence.

10 INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGY

Council noted that the letter prepared for joint signature by the Cardiac Society and Council had been approved by the Cardiac Society executive. RHC is also developing a code of practice on radiology that will include interventional radiology and cardiology.

11 REPORT FROM THE CEO

The CEO reported on the strontium-90 testing program. ARPANSA had inherited records from a testing program undertaken from 1957-78, wherein tissue samples were collected from all mainland capitals to test for strontium-90 from fallout. These records had now been put onto a database, and a report prepared for the Minister. The Minister had referred the matter to the Australian Health Ethics Committee, and their advice was expected in about one month. Council noted that the testing program had demonstrated some uptake of strontium-90 from fallout and that this was used as part of the argument to stop atmospheric weapons testing.

12 COMMITTEE REPORTS

12.1 Report from the Radiation Health Committee

RHC had met on 31 October and 1 November 2001 and discussed the draft RF Standard, Intervention Levels after an accident including iodine prophylaxis, the draft Veterinary Code, the draft X-ray Analysis Code, pre-disposal radioactive waste management, research using human volunteers, discharge of patients who have been treated with radiopharmaceuticals, disposal of radioactive waste by the user, and cosmic radiation. Council noted the RHC's progress.

12.1.1 RHC Statement on Disposal of Smoke Detectors

Mr Critchley tabled a Statement prepared by RHC on the disposal of domestic smoke detectors. The Statement concluded that it was safe for small quantities of detectors to be disposed of with normal household garbage. After discussion, Council endorsed the Statement.

12.1.2 Re-badging of RHS 39

RHS 39 was a joint publication of the National Occupational Health & Safety Commission (NOHSC) and the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) which set dose limits for public and occupational exposure to radiation. NHMRC had handed responsibility for Radiation Health Series publications to ARPANSA. NOHSC had now agreed to re-badging RHS 39 as an ARPANSA/NOHSC publication. This process would involve updating copyright statements, lists of authorities, a revised foreword, and a note under the dose limits tables stating that the use of the exceptional circumstances provisions was no longer recommended for application in Australia.

Council endorsed the re-badging of RHS 39.

12.2 Report from the Nuclear Safety Committee

NSC had met on 8-9 November and was due to meet again on 6 December. NSC had formed 3 working groups to report on key issues related to the Research Reactor construction licence application and their work was progressing. The 3 groups were:

Seismic Design: Issues under consideration include whether the overall approach to seismic analysis is both conservative and consistent with world's best practice and consistent with regard to various seismic siting studies and hazard estimates.

Accident Analysis: Consideration of the overall spectrum of accidents and whether they are adequately addressed in relation to ARPANSA's regulatory assessment criteria and principles. Human factors, sabotage and probabilistic safety analysis are being considered.

Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste Management: Adequacy of the overall strategy is being considered including reprocessing, on-site storage, qualification of fuel type, transport issues and social questions.

A preliminary draft report has been prepared with the final report to the CEO due by the end of January 2002.

13 OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 Letter from Vic Roads

Vic Roads had written to Council in relation to correspondence from residents raising the possibility that ionization of particles near powerlines close to ventilation stacks could have an effect on their health. Council considered a draft reply developed after advice from ARPANSA's Non-ionizing Radiation Branch, which indicated that it had not been demonstrated that any such enhanced deposition will increase human exposure in a way that will result in adverse health effects to the general public.

14 CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 12 April 2002 at Miranda.