

SUMMARY OF MEETING OF 31 JULY 2003

OPENING OF MEETING, ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES & MINUTES

Council met at ARPANSA's Yallambie offices on 31 July 2003. All members were present except Dr Arthur Johnston. The minutes were confirmed after one editorial correction. Mr Critchley and Dr Rouch were welcomed to their first meeting. Mrs Fitch was congratulated on being awarded the Public Service Medal.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Security of sources would be a major discussion item for the November Council meeting. Discussion would include the IAEA Code of Conduct on Safety and Security of Sources. Council noted that the IAEA categorization of sources has also been published. Council had received a reply from the RHC on radiography associated with yearling sales, advising that the draft Veterinary Code adequately dealt with this issue.

Council noted the referrals to RHC and NSC regarding the Council's recommendations on radioactive waste. In regard to recommendation 2 on pre-disposal management of spent fuel, a joint working group of RHC and NSC, will be established. For recommendation 4 regarding definitions and conditioning criteria, a working group is already addressing the issue of conditioning criteria, and the terms of reference for the definitions task will be developed for the next RHC meeting.

The CEO informed Council that the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management had been ratified on 30 July 2003. Australia can now attend the review meeting in November. An Australian delegation, to be led by ARPANSA, is being assembled. DEST, ANSTO and the State/Territory regulators have been invited to nominate members for the delegation.

ARPANSA CONSULTATION PROCESSES

A revised paper on ARPANSA consultation processes discussed the provision of information to the public and the public consultation required by law. Details of the specific processes for facility licence applications, reports to Parliament and Council and Committee consultation processes were also explained. The CEO noted that Council and the Committees all have public representatives and publish summaries of meetings on the web site. Council suggested that openness would be improved if all submissions on a topic were made available on the web site at the end of a consultation period, provided that it was made clear that this would occur unless the submissions were marked "confidential". Responses to the submissions would still be made available at a later stage. Council also suggested that the description of public consultation on the RRR licence should describe the outcomes resulting from public input. It was agreed that the paper would be revised to include this provision.

DEVELOPMENT OF DISCUSSION PAPER ON NORM/TENORM

Mr David Hamilton of Esso informed Council of NORM issues in oil and gas production.

Issues included defining what is NORM contaminated, that there was no regulatory definition, and no accepted means of measuring for surface contamination. There was a need for a risk based definition of “NORM contaminated”, and for disposal criteria and methods for NORM contaminated equipment.

Mr Mark Sontter of NSW EPA provided his views on the industries where NORM arises, the regulatory problems and some options for solutions. Regulatory issues centred principally on what is defined as radioactive and what is exempt. It was proposed that different regulatory controls were needed for different disposal choices. The controls would ensure that the pathway for exposure was properly assessed in each case.

Council discussed and approved the draft terms of reference and projected timelines, and agreed that a draft will be prepared for discussion at the November Council meeting. The draft would discuss terminology and affected industries, focussing on industries relevant to Australia. The paper should concentrate on waste, but address occupational health, public health and trade implications.

Estimating the volume of NORM produced would be a separate consultant project.

REPLACEMENT REACTOR – CURRENT STATUS & REGULATORY ISSUES

The CEO informed Council of recent issues in the construction of the Replacement Reactor. Firstly, penetrations in the bottom plate of the reactor pool liner had been cut without approval, thereby breaching licence conditions. The matter was reported to Parliament by the CEO in a report attached to the 1 October-31 December 2002 Quarterly Report. No sanction had been applied as INVAP had responded well and implemented procedures to avoid a recurrence.

Secondly, 22 pool liner penetrations had been cut in the wrong positions due to incorrect rolling of the steel plate. The fabricator had then tried to repair 10 of the holes without consulting the designer. There had been some delay before INVAP, ANSTO and ARPANSA were informed. The CEO had written to ANSTO and informed them that he would need to be satisfied that the proposed repairs would result in a pool liner as safe as that originally approved. CSIRO Adelaide (welding experts) and Toshiba Japan (304L stainless steel experts) would be asked to review the proposed repairs and advise ARPANSA. NSC had been briefed on these issues.

NATIONAL RADIOACTIVE WASTE REPOSITORY – CURRENT STATUS & REGULATORY ISSUES

An application for licence for the National Radioactive Waste Repository was expected within the next few weeks. This would trigger a process of public consultation and technical assessment, that would include public submissions, an international peer review and a Regulatory Assessment Report by ARPANSA’s Regulatory and Environmental and Radiation Health Branches. The international peer review would review and assess the quality of the application against international guidance.

CURRENT RESEARCH ISSUES IN ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION EXPOSURE

Dr Peter Gies, Manager, UVR Section, ARPANSA gave a presentation on current research in ultraviolet radiation exposure. He described the solar UV monitoring carried out by ARPANSA, personal UV monitoring including a study of exposure of outdoor workers in Queensland. ARPANSA also assesses the UV protection provided by clothing and issues swing tags identifying the UV protection level. The Section had been involved in

assessing the output of solarium lamps and in the drafting of Australian Standards on Solaria, Sunglasses, Sunscreens, and Sun-protective clothing, and the draft ARPANSA occupational UV exposure standard. UV hazard assessments are also carried out for industries using UV sources. Collaborative studies were being undertaken with a range of university, government and research organisations. Other studies included the relationship of UV radiation and multiple sclerosis, satellite UV radiation data validation, and measurement intercomparisons with other laboratories.

TOUR OF ARPANSA LABORATORIES

Council members visited the UV laboratory, the emergency response coordination centre and mobile monitoring centre, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Section, and were given an explanation of the work undertaken in those areas.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

The CEO informed Council that:

- A survey of 60 mobile phone base stations was to be undertaken, including low impact towers. The survey would repeat measurement on sites surveyed in 1997 and add other sites.
- A magnetic field survey in Victorian homes will be undertaken in conjunction with the Electricity Supply Association of Australia and the Victorian Department of Human Services during next year.
- A patient dose survey in general radiology was progressing and would be completed during next year.

Report from the Radiation Health Committee

A report of the Radiation Health Committee meeting of 23-24 July 2003 was tabled. Council was advised of progress on the Radiology Code, the Disposal by the User Code, the Research Code, the ELF Standard, reporting of occupational doses to UNSCEAR, and the Australian Radiation Incidents Register. The Committee had also considered the CEO's referral of the Council's waste recommendations and determined its course of action to respond.

Report from the Nuclear Safety Committee

Reports of two recent NSC meeting were tabled. The first meeting, on 20 June, had discussed effluent discharges from ANSTO, breaches of licensing conditions and errors in fabrication of the pool liner of the replacement reactor, a preliminary proposal for decommissioning of the HIFAR reactor, the program for assessment of the application for the National Radioactive Waste Repository, and intervention levels in radiological emergencies. The second meeting, on 14 July, was to brief the Committee on the reasons for the errors in the pool liner penetrations, the steps proposed to rectify the faults, and the steps proposed to avoid similar problems in other systems, structures and components.

Interventional Cardiology Questionnaire

Council was advised that the questionnaire should be finalised shortly after a Cardiac Society meeting on 10 August 2003.

Progress on the National Directory for Radiation Protection

Council was informed that the draft National Directory for Radiation Protection was progressing through the National Uniformity Implementation Panel (Radiation Control). Competency and pre-licence requirements for relevant professions would be included in

the next draft rather than a protocol for implementation of mutual recognition principles. A regulatory impact statement for the Directory was also being developed.

Action by jurisdictions on Preventative Medicine

A summary of the action taken in all jurisdictions in response to the development of centres undertaking whole body CT scans on asymptomatic patients was tabled. NSW had introduced regulations, and Victoria was considering a similar approach. SA and Queensland had written to centres reminding them of the requirement for a medical referral, whereas other jurisdictions did not have such centres and had taken no action.

Information collected by EMA on radiation emergency response resources

A summary of the information collected by Emergency Management Australia (EMA) on radiation monitoring resources and thermal imaging equipment that may be used in a radiation emergency was tabled. Radiation detection equipment was available via radiation regulators, universities and major hospitals, while thermal imaging equipment was held by emergency service organisations.

Council Annual Report

A draft of the Council Annual Report, which would as in previous years be published as a section of the ARPANSA Annual Report, was tabled for comment.

CLOSURE AND NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 28 November 2003 in Sydney.