



9 July 2019

Ref:D1922715

Dr Roger Allison
Chair, Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council
C/- Council Secretariat
619 Lower Plenty Road
Yallambie VIC 3085

Re: Nuclear and radiological preparedness – informing the Australian public in advance of a nuclear or radiological emergency

Dear Roger

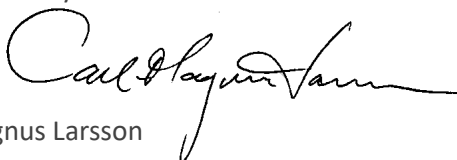
Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council ('the Council'), dated 30 May 2018, containing recommendations on the role that ARPANSA should play in communicating with the Australian community in advance of a nuclear or radiological emergency. My response has been postponed due to the absence of an appointed Chair of Council during the second half of 2018, however I feel that the response that follows will now help update you on some of the work that has been undertaken since May 2018 and continues to progress at ARPANSA and in other parts of Government in this area.

I was pleased to note Council's acknowledgement of the work already undertaken by ARPANSA in this area. Accordingly, the advice from Council recommended that ARPANSA continue to build and maintain trust in the Australian community, and continue to maintain its radiation emergency preparedness and response capability. In addition, it was recommended that ARPANSA consult with other Federal Government agencies to agree on appropriate strategies to enhance emergency preparedness of the public prior to any events occurring, and to provide factual advice in relation to nuclear or radiological emergencies.

I have included examples of ARPANSA's work, both underway and planned, relating to each of the recommendations made by Council. These are arranged under appropriate subheadings in the attachment to this letter. ARPANSA staff would be happy to discuss these responses further with Council, if required, at its meeting on 1-2 August 2019.

Thank you again for Council's advice, which will be very helpful in moving forward with informative, transparent public communications prior to a nuclear or radiological emergency in Australia. Please note that your advice and my response will be made public by placing them on the ARPANSA website.

Yours sincerely



Carl-Magnus Larsson
CEO of ARPANSA

Attachment: ARPANSA's current and upcoming work on communication with the public prior to a nuclear or radiological emergency

Recommendations (extract from letter of 30 May 2018)

“Accordingly, Council recommends to ARPANSA that it continue to:

- Build and maintain the trust of the Australian community as a trusted advisor in the area of radiation protection, nuclear safety and security;
- Maintain ARPANSA's strong radiation emergency preparedness and response capability and continue to inform and reassure the public of this.

In addition, Council recommends that ARPANSA should:

- Consult with other relevant Federal Government agencies as specified in the Health Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear Incidents of National Consequence (CBRNINC) Plan to agree on appropriate strategies to enhance emergency preparedness of the public prior to any events occurring;
- Provide factual advice in clear, plain language (e.g. in the form of fact sheets) in relation to nuclear or radiological emergencies (e.g. protective actions that could be taken).”

Continuing work of ARPANSA related to maintaining trust and emergency preparedness and response capability

ARPANSA's Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Strategy 2018-22

The *ARPANSA Emergency Preparedness and Response Strategy 2018-22* provides the overarching vision and direction for emergency preparedness and response for ARPANSA. It seeks to align the agency's priorities with international obligations and whole of government capabilities, sharpening ARPANSA's capacity to respond in the case of a nuclear or radiological emergency in Australia or abroad.

Focus Area 1 of the strategy relates to ARPANSA being response ready. Activities identified under this focus area relating to communication include “clarifying and fulfilling ARPANSA's role in communication during an emergency” in order to work towards the outcome of “effective communication with the public and government during preparation and response phases of an emergency.”

International Engagement

Communication during emergencies is under consideration internationally. ARPANSA has recently had active involvement in the following international meetings held by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna;

- Emergency Preparedness and Response Standards Committee (EPReSC) – These meetings are held twice-yearly, with the aim of producing and reviewing documents used as international best practice. Active review and comment has been provided for the soon to be published *Arrangements for Public Communication in Preparedness and Response for a Nuclear or Radiological Emergency (DS475)*. A previous version of this document was provided for Australian comment on the ARPANSA [website](#) late in 2017.

- The 9th meeting of the Representatives of Competent Authorities identified under the Early Notification Convention and the Assistance Convention (CAM), 18-22 June 2018 – CAM meetings are held on a biennial basis. At the 9th meeting ARPANSA provided the Chair and a participant who sat on a panel session focussed on the International Radiation Monitoring Information System (IRMIS). The meeting also included panel sessions on “Communication with the public in an emergency” and “Information exchange in an emergency”.
- International Symposium on Communicating Nuclear and Radiological Emergencies to the Public, 1-5 October 2018 – This meeting included contributors from around the world, the majority of which identified as having communications backgrounds. An ARPANSA staff member attended this symposium, provided a presentation entitled “Communicating in an emergency – an Australian perspective”, and participated in a panel session which explored the inter-relationship between technical and communications experts. Ten themes were discussed over a week, with one of the major recommendations to have pre-prepared definitions to challenging questions and jargon, as agreed by all parties. These should include simple, consistent answers to the questions ‘Am I safe?’ and ‘What cautions should I take?’ The Symposium report, including outcomes, can be found on the IAEA [website](#).

National Committees & Exercises

ARPANSA participates in a number of national committees and exercises that often include both Federal and state/territory level representation. These refer to the planning of communications during a nuclear or radiological emergency situation. Recent examples include;

- Visiting Ships Panel (Nuclear) – meeting twice-yearly, the VSP(N) considers visits from foreign nuclear-powered ships to Australian Ports. The process of a visit includes receipt of a warning order, port preparations, radiological monitoring, first response, health response and communication.
- IAEA Convention Exercise 3, July 2017 (ConvEx-3) – ARPANSA participated in a 36-hour emergency exercise simulating a Fukushima-like emergency release from a nuclear reactor in Hungary. The exercise involved around 35 staff members, and included national and international interactions, monitoring the reactor status, production of modelling and advice for Australians abroad, media briefings as well as Twitter and Facebook updates.
- Emergency Exercise Hail Caesium (Department of Health, 25 September 2018) – This tabletop exercise included several federal government departments and agencies, with the consideration of land- and sea-based scenarios for reactor or radiological accidents respectively. Roles and responsibilities were discussed, with public messaging an important part of the exercise. A documented outcome was that, in the case of a nuclear or radiological emergency, Health and ARPANSA will work together to develop public messaging regarding the risk to the Australian population. This would likely be posted on both Health and ARPANSA websites and social media as appropriate.

Publication of Best Practice Guidance

ARPANSA, in conjunction with the Radiation Health Committee (RHC), has published the *Guide for Radiation Protection in Emergency Exposure Situations* (RPS G-3) This Guide incorporates international best practice in two parts;

1. The Framework,
2. Planning, Preparedness, Response and Transition.

Reference is made to the importance of communication with the public during an emergency, and on the importance of these considerations during the preparedness stage.

This Guide was approved for publication at the March RHC 2019 meeting, soon after the Council had recommended that the CEO adopt the Guide. Now that the Guide has been published on the ARPANSA [website](#), a plan for national implementation will be initiated. This is envisaged to include a rolling plan for training and exercise with Federal, state and territory regulators and responders with some focus on how we best communicate in the preparedness and response phases of an emergency.

ARPANSA annually reviews information on its website to reflect best practice and to provide new advice on emerging issues. As part of this process, ARPANSA will update existing factsheets and information to reflect the new guidance provided in the Guide for Radiation Protection in Emergency Exposure Situations (RPS G-3). This will include:

- The review and update of the current [information](#) relating to EPR,
- Publication in the next 12 months of a factsheet on worker exposure during a radiological or nuclear emergency.

Future work of ARPANSA related to consultation with Government and provision of advice

Outcomes of Peer Reviews

- ARPANSA took part in the World Health Organization (WHO) Joint External Evaluation (JEE), November 2017 – This review assessed Australia’s capabilities in relation to the implementation of the *International Health Regulations (2005)*. The implementation of the recommendations has begun, with the recent publication of *Australia’s National Action [Plan](#) for Health Security (2019 – 2023)*. As well as contributing to various recommendations as a stakeholder that relate to social media application and communication in emergencies, ARPANSA is the lead agency for the following recommendations;
 - Enhance the interoperability of Federal and State/Territory radiation operations through broad multisectorial/multijurisdictional exercises,
 - Develop federal guidance for jurisdictional first responder occupational exposures,
 - Conduct a national hazard assessment, to include creating an inventory of radiation sources, and establish a national radiation capability register.

The longer-term implementation of the RPS G-3 in association with the RHC will assist with achieving these outcomes.

- ARPANSA initiated the IAEA International Regulatory Review Service (IRRS), which took place in November 2018 – This review and mission is the largest multi-jurisdictional IRRS so far co-ordinated by the IAEA. A review of the national system for radiation protection and nuclear safety, and its implementation, was undertaken. This included regulatory aspects of Emergency Preparedness and Response. In addition to the recommendations identified under the JEE process, recommendations were made for Federal, state and territory governments to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly assigned and exercised. This is also applicable to ARPANSA’s own incident management plan, the basis of the ARPANSA response to an emergency.