



Australian Government
Australian Radiation Protection
and Nuclear Safety Agency



Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Science and Resources

Australian Radioactive Waste Agency

ARWA-ARPANSA Liaison Forum (LFAA)

Executive Summary of 27 February 2023

Terms of Reference

- The meeting was held in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the ARWA-ARPANSA Liaison Forum (LFAA TOR), dated 31 August 2022.

Outcomes of Previous LFAA

- The Executive Summary from the previous LFAA, dated 31 August 2022, was accepted by both parties, with copies being made available on both the ARPANSA and ARWA websites.

Strategic Overview from ARWA CEO

- ARWA CEO reflected on ARWA's action to address resourcing and licence to operate challenges. Good progress had been made on resourcing with recruitment into the corporate areas and some very good staff joining the Safety and Technical Branch, including from the international recruitment process.
- ARWA CEO reflected on considerable work with community and indigenous engagement to maintain social licence. A high-level discussion was held about ARWA's organisational status and licensing considerations.
- ARPANSA CEO sought further information about ARWA's cultural awareness training. ARWA COO advised that ARWA used a local service provider, and offered training to all staff.
- ARWA CEO noted that Federal Court hearings would commence 6 March 2023.

Strategic Overview from ARPANSA CEO

- ARPANSA CEO provided an update on actions to address workforce challenges, including working across government and implementing the ARPANSA graduate program. 3 graduates had been accepted in the first round, the first graduates in almost 10 years. Specialist and generalist skills had been targeted. The program would run for 2 years and involve placements across the organisation
- As part of the program, graduates would undertake the Graduate Certificate in Radiation Safety at the University of Adelaide. ARWA offered support to ARPANSA graduates during any visits to Adelaide, including briefings on ARWA or facilitating visits to Kimba.
- A general discussion was held on the limitations of the APS graduate programs, including geographical focus on Canberra, and future interest in rotation of graduates among nuclear agencies.
- ARPANSA CEO noted the need to prioritise indigenous engagement workforce development, and was working on its first Reconciliation Action Plan.
- ARPANSA is reviewing the Radiation Protection Series and would reach out to stakeholders that draw on that guidance.
- ARPANSA noted preparations for the Integrated Regulatory Review Service Follow-up Mission were underway and that evidence of progress against Action Items from the 2018 Mission were required. A detailed update was provided under item 5.
- There was a general discussion about ARPANSA lessons learned and wider implications from the lost radiation source incident in Western Australia, including consideration of how to prevent such an incident from happening again.

ARWA Matters

- ARWA provided an update on the Judicial Review and Constitutional Challenge hearings that would be heard in the Federal Court from 6 March 2023.
- ARWA provided an update on policy processes and the November 2022 Government's Gateway Review process.
- ARWA provided an update on engagement with traditional owners and the community. The February Kimba Consultative Committee meeting was well attended and featured a presentation by ANSTO on their role in locating the radioactive source in WA. ARWA had also facilitated 2 visits late in 2022 by Traditional Owners of neighbouring communities as part of its Cultural Heritage Assessment process to Kimba to share information about the facility and seek information from Traditional Owners about their concerns. As a result of these visits, ARWA was establishing working groups to discuss cultural heritage work, economic development, prosperity and wellbeing.
- ARPANSA sought further information about ARWA's Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the site characterisation activities and the Cultural Heritage Assessment.

- ARWA advised that Stage 2 site characterisation activities commenced in November 2022 and included flora, fauna surveys and collection of data to inform facility design and road upgrade considerations. This was additional to the Stage 1 site characterisation activities undertaken for all 3 nominated sites. These activities would continue over 18 months including monitoring and they do not signify the start of construction. ARWA intended to provide as much detail as possible about facility design and design options in its siting licence application.
- There was a high-level discussion about roles and responsibilities for managing Intermediate Level Waste, including route planning and understanding disposal options.
- ARWA Manager Radiation Safety provided an update on regulatory processes. The environmental regulator (DCCEEW) had opened the period for public comment on draft tailored guidelines on the preparation of a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the NRWMF.

ARPANSA Regulatory Matters

- In order to prepare for the Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) Follow-up Mission, agencies were required to provide a summary of progress and evidence to support the closure of a finding. There were 2 recommendations for Department of Industry, Science and Resources, including in relation to a national framework for the management of radioactive waste and developing a decommissioning policy.
- ARPANSA Chief Regulatory Officer said workforce issues had been a focus of discussion at the recent International Conference on Effective Nuclear and Radiation Regulatory Systems including staff shortages and challenges attracting young people into the industry. There was general discussion about contribution of human and organisational factors to accidents and incidents. Recruiting against these skills could help improve performance.
- ARPANSA provided an update on regulatory activities, including a forthcoming revision of the guide on “Applying for a licence for a radioactive waste or storage facility” which would be issued for external agency consultation, including with ARWA.

Mutual Areas of Interest

- There was a general discussion about priority of international activities. ARPANSA recommended ARWA consideration of the IAEA International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, Decommissioning, Environmental Protection and Remediation planned for 6-10 November 2023.
- Attendees agreed on the need to communicate on international priority meetings, including those with a focus on indigenous/First Nations engagement in relation to radioactive waste management.
- There was a general discussion on developing a research and workforce strategy to address future regulatory requirements and skills and capacity.
- There was a general discussion about licencing requirements for waste disposal research projects, noting there was currently no policy in place.

Official

- There was a discussion about planning for an Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation (ARTEMIS) review mission to Australia to provide expert advice to ARWA.

Next Meeting

- It is proposed that the next meeting be hosted by ARPANSA in late July or early August 2023.