



Radiation Health Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date	5 April 2023
Time	1:30 PM - 3:30 PM AEDT
Location	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Present	Dr Roslyn Drummond (Chair), Dr Gillian Hirth (CEO), Bradley Feldtman, Fay Bellis, Glenn Riley, Mark Carey, Penny Hill, Simon Critchley, Dr Stephen Newbery, Hazel Upton, Dr Joanna Wriedt, Daniel Bellifemine.
Absent	N/A
Secretariat	James Wheaton, Adrian Hawley
Invitees	Dr Ivan Williams, Dr Rick Tinker, Katie Volter, Nathan Wahl, Dr Chris Brzozek, Jim Scott, Jenni Stiffe, Dr Marcus Grzechnik, Dr Fiona Charalambous, A/Prof Sophie Dwyer.

1 - Introduction

The Chair opened the meeting, and respectfully acknowledged the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land from which each participant joined the meeting, and paid respects to their Elders, past and present. There were no significant events to note since the previous meeting, and the November 2022 minutes were noted.

1.1 - Tasks/Actions update

The secretariat provided a summary of recent tasks, noting the actions taken out of session to complete outstanding tasks, and ongoing items progressing via RHC working groups. It was noted that the topic of full body scanners at correctional facilities, as discussed previously, would now be scheduled for further discussion at the July 2023 RHC. Several RHC items were noted as being relevant to planning for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) follow-up mission later in 2023. This included work on a draft dosimetry service provider standard; a draft RHC statement on occupational exposure dose limits; and advisory statement on occupational 'compensatory arrangements' including Safe Work Australia's input; and guidance documents on the Medical Exposure Code.

It was noted that Victoria is intending to apply a licence condition clarifying the application of section 2.2 of RPS 10 to Dental Hygienists, Dental Therapists and Oral Health Therapists. Victoria agreed to forward the draft licence condition to the RHC for consideration. Separately, following additional comments from jurisdictions on the draft dosimetry service provider standard, Victoria recommended that a further draft is circulated for RHC's consideration prior to public consultation.

Task: Victoria to re-circulate the draft dosimetry service provider standard.

Task: Victoria to forward advice on RPS 10 application to OHTs.

2 - Member representing the public

There were no items noted for tabling from the member representing the interests of the general public. There was one issue from the recent Nuclear Safety Committee meeting, regarding nuclear safety standards, identified as potentially of interest to the broader RHC.

3 - Update from the CEO of ARPANSA

The CEO of ARPANSA gave an update on the activities of ARPANSA, including the Nuclear Safety Committee (NSC) and the Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council (the Council).

The NSC considered draft regulatory guidance for radioactive waste management. It separately noted the CEO's comment that there may be a need to develop a broader Nuclear Safety Series (NSS) of codes and standards to complement the existing Radiation Protection Series (RPS), to support nuclear-powered submarines. This will be discussed further at the next NSC on 20 July 2023.

The Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council met on 30 March 2023 for the last meeting of many members' appointed terms. The Council welcomed a new nominee of the Northern Territory Chief Minister, the NT Chief Health Officer Dr Christine Connors, replacing Dr Hugh Heggie following his appointment as Administrator of the NT. The CEO tabled a response to Council advice that had been provided since 2020, and key ongoing issues to be passed onto the next term of Council for their awareness were noted. This included Council provided advice to the CEO on Principles and attributes of an effective independent regulator for nuclear-powered submarines.

The CEO advised that she met the Australian Radioactive Waste Management Agency (ARWA) CEO in February 2023 as part of the ARPANSA-ARWA liaison forum. Noting ARPANSA has no regulatory role at this time, ARWA advised the proposed National Radioactive Waste Management Facility is subject to two ongoing legal challenges. ARWA continues to work on preliminary site characterisation required for any future regulatory application and continues its community engagement.

The CEO gave an update on the Australian Government's 14 March 2023 announcement of the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, which includes shorter-term plans for a submarine rotational presence, and longer-term plans to acquire and then manufacture submarines. The CEO noted that details of how nuclear-powered submarine regulation for safety and security were still subject to government consideration at the time of the meeting until the federal budget (9 May 2023). ARPANSA has provided considerable input into whole-of-government discussions on proposed future regulatory models. The Department of Defence has also commenced work to consider waste arrangements, although submarine de-fueling is not expected for decades. One of the most significant challenges for Australia, and ARPANSA, is building a workforce to support nuclear-powered submarines. ARPANSA has recommenced its graduate program and will continue to engage in discussions on a national nuclear development program in tertiary education.

The CEO briefly mentioned ARPANSA's involvement in the response to the lost-source incident in Western Australia (WA), noting that this would be discussed later in the agenda. The RHC also heard a summary of ARPANSA's media and public enquiries, noting that while the topic of AUKUS gained significant media attention, it had not generated any public enquiries for ARPANSA. Other topics of interest had included the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war, the WA lost-source incident, and radiofrequency queries driven by the increased telecommunications small cell infrastructure rollout.

3.1 - IRRS Update

The CEO updated the Council on the IAEA Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) Follow Up Mission to Australia schedule for October 2023. Initial planning meetings had occurred in Vienna in March 2023. ARPANSA's focus over coming months will be to coordinate preparation of Advanced Reference Material (ARM) that will go to the IRRS team prior to the Mission. It was noted that some topics identified for improvement in the 2018 IRRS mission remain highly relevant in 2023, especially national uniformity, and workforce.

The Secretariat provided an update on work underway internally at ARPANSA and in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Health, through its custody of the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth), to draft the Advance Reference Material which will be provided to the 2023 IAEA IRRS Follow-Up Mission. This material will identify what activities have been underway or completed since the 2018 IAEA IRRS Mission, as relevant to addressing the findings and recommendations from that mission.

4 - Discussion of WA lost source incident

The WA member gave a high-level overview of the lost-source incident in January/February 2023 and the multi-jurisdictional response. The incident triggered the mechanisms established under Commonwealth disaster management planning arrangements.

A general discussion followed covering a range of related regulatory factors and inter-jurisdictional arrangements. These included matters around the integrity and design of the transport package; gauge assemblies and the benefit of mechanical engineering input; coordination of messaging during the incident; detection methods; regulator resourcing challenges; post-incident reviews and sharing of lessons learned between jurisdictions over the coming months; any need to review the transport code and its subordinate requirements; and feeding further recommendations to IAEA committees.

The relevance of this incident to IRRS recommendations was noted. ARPANSA agreed to initiate discussions with jurisdictions about the best mechanism to share equipment and staff resources in the event of future incidents, and how best to coordinate with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). ARPANSA also noted it would consider facilitating a national emergency exercise program in the future. The RHC requested that the WA member share any post-incident reviews or provide an update at the next RHC meeting.

Task: ARPANSA to initiate discussions with jurisdictions on the best mechanisms for sharing equipment and staff resources in the event of future incidents.

Task: RHC to review codes and standards, to identify any areas for potential update based on the lessons learned from the incident, starting with the Transport Code.

Task: WA to circulate any publicly available post-incident review reports or provide an update at the next RHC meeting.

5 - Other Business

The RHC Chair noted her attendance at the Radiation Health Experts Reference Panel (RHERP, which advises enHealth) where the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care's (ACSQHC) revision of Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation Scheme (DIAS) standards and potential overlaps with RPS codes was discussed. RHERP has asked the RHC to look at the overlap between DIAS and RPS standards and provide advice for further consideration. The Chair, ARPANSA, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia indicated an interest in contributing to a working group to consider this issue.

Task: Working group to consider how the DIAS standards relate to the RPS Codes.

5.1 - Out of session

The Secretariat noted that a draft statement to align the definitions of Radiation Safety Officer (RSO) and Radiation Protection Officer (RPO), which are used variously across Australia's jurisdictions, will be circulated to the RHC out-of-session for consideration prior to the next meeting.

Task: ARPANSA to circulate a draft statement to align the definitions of Radiation Safety Officer (RSO) and Radiation Protection Officer (RPO).

Task: ARPANSA to follow up with safety standard committee representatives for input at next full meeting of the RHC.