



Australian Government
**Australian Radiation Protection
and Nuclear Safety Agency**



Australian Government
**Department of Industry,
Science and Resources**

**Australian
Radioactive
Waste Agency**

ARPANSA-ARWA Liaison Forum

Executive Summary of 6 May 2025

Terms of Reference

- The meeting was held in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the ARWA-ARPANSA Liaison Forum (LFAA), dated 16 October 2024.

Outcomes of Previous LFAA

- The Executive Summary from the previous LFAA, dated 25 October 2024, was accepted by both parties, with copies to be made available on the ARPANSA website.

Strategic Overview from ARWA

- ARWA's CEO outlined the organisation's future priorities, including preparing information for returning government on disposal pathways.
- ARWA has made progress in establishing a programmatic approach across the agency. This approach is structured around four key programs: Disposal, Siting and Social Licence, Agency Transformation, and Waste Management Services.
- The agency continues to recruit staff for key positions, aiming to enhance both capacity and capability. Currently, the staffing level is approximately 95 people.
- ARWA noted that in due course there may be a need to review and update the *National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012*. ARWA also noted that decisions on disposal pathways needed to be made before initiating any future siting process.
- ARWA indicated that the updated Australian National Inventory of Radioactive Waste will be published later this year.

Strategic Overview from ARPANSA

- ARPANSA's future priorities include the ARPANSA Licence Holder Forum on 30 May 2025 in Canberra, participation in the ARTEMIS mission to Spain, and the Waste Safety Standards Committee reviews.
- ARPANSA noted that similar to ARWA, staff retention and recruitment remains challenging due to the global requirement for nuclear skills as well as the ageing workforce.
- ARPANSA is working alongside NPSRD (Nuclear Powered-Submarine Regulatory Design) to facilitate transition of regulatory responsibilities for submarine facilities to the new Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator by 1 November 2025. This is a significant priority for the agency as ARPANSA works to promote uniformity of radiation protection and nuclear safety in a changing regulatory environment.

ARPANSA Regulatory Matters

- ARPANSA discussed the revision of the *Regulatory Guide – Disposal of Sources* and emphasised the need for both internal and external consultation. The updated guide will clarify regulatory expectations for radioactive waste disposal, liability, and the transfer of responsibility for Commonwealth licence holders.
- ARPANSA delegates attended the 8th review meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Joint Convention and presented the Country Report. The plenary session saw participation from 77 out of 90 contracting parties. Topics of discussion included knowledge management, spent waste/fuel, and the sharing of experiences among contracting parties. Australia received recognition for good practice and good performance, such as the inclusion of the broader World Health Organization definition of health into standards and the Australian Government's commitment to long-term waste management and disposal. This achievement was a collaborative effort by the Australian delegation that included representatives from ARPANSA, ARWA, ANSTO and the Australian Mission in Vienna. ARPANSA expressed gratitude to ARWA for their contribution and support.
- ARPANSA attended the NEA Radioactive Waste Management Committee meeting, where the importance of maintaining regulatory independence was emphasised. Discussions covered challenges related to Waste Acceptance Criteria (WAC) and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in waste management. The committee also noted progress in Sweden, Finland, Canada, and Switzerland. Additionally, the meeting highlighted the risks associated with an aging workforce and the need for training in AI and robotics.
- ARPANSA hosted an international IAEA workshop in Sydney on the safe transport of radioactive material. The workshop featured four presentations, including two from ARPANSA and one from ANSTO. The IAEA has posted news about the workshop on their website, highlighting the application of recently updated training materials based on the latest regulations.
- ARPANSA also discussed their participation in the follow-up ARTEMIS mission to Spain, scheduled for late September to early October 2025. This mission aims to review the findings from the original mission conducted in October 2018.

ARWA Matters

- ARWA spoke about its radioactive waste disposal program, highlighting two key projects: near-surface disposal and geological disposal. The goal of the near-surface disposal project is to develop recommendations and evidence to inform government decision-making on disposal pathways. Currently, the project is gathering data, analysing different models, and planning next steps.

- The Geological Disposal Initial Business Case is examining long-term solutions for managing radioactive waste deep underground. The focus is on understanding the safety issues, environmental impacts, costs, and timelines associated with implementing these potential solutions. The aim is to determine the best approach for Australia and plan the necessary steps to move forward.
- ARWA discussed their Expert View program, which offers formal advice to radioactive waste holders on the level of technical risk associated with proposed waste management approaches. The program went live in mid-March 2025, with Commonwealth entities showing interest.
- ARWA has established a Social Licence team to develop and guide the approach for building and maintaining social licence for radioactive waste management activities, with a primary focus on disposal pathways. The team has developed a set of internal social licence principles. These principles currently form the foundation for a social licence framework that will guide ARWA's ongoing efforts to earn, build, and sustain acceptance and trust in its radioactive waste program. The social licence work is being developed in conjunction with ARWA's technical siting approach. This integrated approach will inform ARWA's position and advice to the government regarding social licence and siting strategies.
- In late 2024, ARWA developed a State and Territory Engagement Plan to engage with states and territories. Through meetings with senior officials across jurisdictions, ARWA is strengthening relationships and understanding about its work.
- ARWA presented on the Agency's transformation program, which aims to develop a flexible framework that enhances efficiency and adaptability in ARWA.
- ARWA spoke about its increased participation in international committees and emphasised the importance of international engagement. ARWA has successfully joined several international committees, including the NEA Radioactive Waste Management Committee, the Integrated Group Safety Case, and the Forum on Stakeholder Confidence. ARWA Representatives have actively participated in key events such as the Waste Management Symposium, the Joint Convention Eighth Review Meeting, the IAEA General Conference, the NEA Safety Case Symposium, the NEA Risk Communication Training, and the Technical Meeting on Global Radium 226.
- ARWA reported that the first draft of the ARTEMIS self-assessment is nearly complete and will be sent to the IAEA in preparation for a discussion scheduled in June 2025. Additionally, an ARTEMIS incoming visit is currently planned for 9 to 18 November 2025. ARPANSA requested an update on the proposed ARTEMIS visit after ARWA's June meeting with the IAEA.
- ARWA is considering sending representatives to future events, including WATEC, the International Nuclear Law Program, and PATRAM. Additionally, ARWA noted the IAEA is scheduled to deliver deep geological repository training from 23--27 June 2025 which will be open to other agencies.

Mutual Areas of Interest

- ARWA and ARPANSA provided feedback to meeting participants about their visit to the Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (STUK) in Helsinki, and the ONKALO spent nuclear fuel encapsulation and deep geological disposal facility at Olkiluoto in Finland on 14-15 April 2025. The visit was coordinated by the Australian Safeguards and Non-proliferation Office and hosted by the STUK.
- During the visit, they toured the spent fuel encapsulation facility and the underground repository that will support the disposal of spent fuel from Finland's five current operating nuclear power stations. The facility will also have capacity for additional nuclear power plants if constructed. Site investigation and selection in Finland first began

in 1983, with the current site agreed in the late 1990's. Excavation of the ONKALO geological repository commenced in 2004 and the construction and operation licensing process has been ongoing since 2012. The review and approval of the operating license by STUK is currently in progress. Finland has developed a solution for their nuclear power industry and is currently reviewing and updating their waste regulations to address disposal pathways for some of its low and intermediate level civilian waste.

Next Meeting

It is proposed that the next meeting is held in person or online, as appropriate for the agenda, in November 2025.