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## **RADIATION HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL (RHSAC) – Sustainability and Radiation Protection in Australia**

The Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council (Council), as the statutory advisory body to the CEO of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), has considered radiation protection and nuclear safety in relation to sustainability, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Council notes that more broadly, the Australian government has committed to integrating the SDGs across all levels of government, recognising them as a global blueprint for sustainable development. The government has adopted a “whole-of-government” approach to the SDGs, encouraging agencies to mainstream them into existing processes and policies. Whilst the goals began as aspirational targets, they have now been incorporated into binding international treaties and agreements, to which Australia is a party.

Council considers that the United Nations SDGs represent an important and evolving framework for environmental and public health regulation. ARPANSA has an important role in leading the radiation protection and nuclear safety sector’s engagement within that framework.

This letter outlines Council’s deliberations on sustainability and radiation protection in Australia.

### **1. LEADERSHIP & NATIONAL UNIFORMITY**

In terms of standards setting, Council notes that the Radiation Protection Series (RPS) is a national asset that forms the common basis of radiation protection across Australia. While the RPS does not explicitly address sustainability or the SDGs (recognising that the documents have been developed over many years), the individual documents implicitly incorporate the principles of

sustainability. The opportunity over time is to, where appropriate, more explicitly incorporate the principles and strengthen leadership and national uniformity in this area.

Council notes that ARPANSA recently published a framework for the development and implementation of environmental monitoring and assessment programs to demonstrate protection of people and the environment: “Monitoring and Assessment of Radiation in the Australian Environment”<sup>1</sup> which considers practical sustainability. This type of document provides practical advice that is linked to the broader international approaches on sustainability.

## 2. INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ARPANSA as an organisation, and its employees, continue to be leaders in the global radiological protection sector, including possessing strong working relationships with the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In 2024, the ICRP published an analysis examining the relationship between the System of Radiological Protection and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>2</sup>. The ICRP paper proposed that sustainability be considered and more explicitly addressed in the next ICRP general recommendation as part of the ongoing review of ICRP Publication 103.

The combination of ARPANSA’s international reputation together with the review of the system of protection provides a unique opportunity for Australia to significantly contribute.

## 3. ARPANSA’S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

The culture of sustainability within ARPANSA is strong, as demonstrated in recent programs, including:

- Active support and outreach programs into the Asia Pacific region.
- First Nations people engagement, including recently launched Reconciliation Action Plan.
- National approaches to emergency preparedness.
- Development of national standards for radiation use and protection.
- The well-established RPS.
- Public outreach and education.

Council notes that The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing is committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its corresponding 17 SDGs. ARPANSA has the opportunity to continue demonstrating visible leadership on SDG alignment through highlighting what it has achieved as a leading Commonwealth organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> At <https://www.arpansa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2025-06/Environmental%20framework.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *The system of radiological protection and the UN sustainable development goals* at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00411-024-01089-w>

**Recommendations:**

Council presents the following recommendations for your consideration:

- Consider the establishment of a narrative in RPS F-1 (Radiation Protection Fundamentals) on the connections between radiation protection and sustainability and the United Nations SDGs. This could explain how ARPANSA's core activities contribute to specific SDGs with suggested SDG alignment.
- Explore publishing a standalone, voluntary guidance document that would encourage licensees and others to consider how their radiation protection activities contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.
- Continue to consider and develop publications similar to "Monitoring and Assessment of Radiation in the Australian Environment" that provide national leadership on interactions with the SDGs for the whole Australian community.
- Given the ICRP are actively considering the integration of United Nations SDGs into its next general recommendations, ARPANSA should continue to actively participate in that process to assist in shaping the emerging international framework.
- Identify any additional sustainable development work that the IAEA and ICRP are undertaking and continue to collaborate actively with these organisations and their plans.
- Consider alignment mapping to ARPANSA's strategic priorities in the Corporate Plan.
- Consider mechanisms to promote sustainability principles.
- Capture and demonstrate the significant progress that ARPANSA is contributing already to sustainable development in a transparent and measurable way.
- Continue to engage with State and Territories and industry to explore and prioritise what sustainability initiatives are best for the Australian community.

Council supports and encourages ARPANSA to continue to strengthen Australian, regional and global action towards achieving the radiation protection aspects of the SDGs.

Kind regards



**Dr Jane Canestra**

**Chair**

Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council