



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



Quarterly Report

of the

Chief Executive Officer of ARPANSA

January – March 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

From our scientists to the world's first scientists, we respectfully acknowledge Traditional Owners and First Nations communities and their rich cultures. We recognise, respect and continue to learn from Indigenous science knowledges, and the deep understanding and observations of land, waters and sky carried and shared by First Nations peoples over thousands of years.

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Letter of transmittal

22 June 2026

The Hon Rebecca White MP
Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

The *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998* (the Act) requires the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) to submit to the Minister, at the end of each quarter, a report on:

- the operations during the quarter of the CEO, ARPANSA, the Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council (the Council), the Nuclear Safety Committee (the NSC) and the Radiation Health Committee (the RHC)
- details of directions given by the Minister to the CEO under section 16 of the Act
- details of directions given by the CEO under section 41 of the Act
- details of improvement notices given by inspectors under section 80A of the Act
- details of any breach of licence conditions by a licensee, of which the CEO is aware
- details of all reports received by the CEO from the Council and the NSC under Part 4, paragraphs 20(f) or 26(1)(d) of the Act
- a list of all facilities licensed under Part 5 of the Act.

I am pleased to provide you with a report, meeting the requirements of the Act, covering the period 1 January - 31 March 2026.

Please note that subsection 60(6) of the Act requires you to cause a copy of the report to be laid before each House of the Parliament within 15 sitting days of the day on which this report was given to you.

Yours sincerely

Dr Gillian Hirth AO

CEO of ARPANSA

The operations of the CEO and ARPANSA

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) is the Australian Government's primary authority on radiation protection and nuclear safety. Our purpose is to protect the Australian people and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation, through understanding risks, best practice regulation, research, policy, services, partnerships and engaging with the community.

ARPANSA sits within the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing portfolio and has a single outcome, as set out in the 2025-26 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS):

Protection of people and the environment through radiation protection and nuclear safety research, policy, advice, codes, standards, services and regulation.

The Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Program, contained within the 2025-26 PBS, describes 4 key activities against which ARPANSA seeks to achieve its outcome. These are:

- Provide high quality advice to government and the community on health, safety and environmental risks from radiation.
- Provide emergency preparedness and response systems for a radiological or nuclear incident.
- Promote patient safety in radiotherapy and diagnostic radiology.
- Ensure protection of people and the environment through efficient and effective regulation.

The report on the operations of the CEO and ARPANSA focuses on these activities.

Provide high quality advice to government and the community on health, safety, and environmental risks from radiation

Enhanced Electromagnetic Energy (EME) Program

As the Australian Government's primary authority on radiation protection, ARPANSA supports international scientific collaboration to enhance protection of people and the environment. As part of this work, an ARPANSA staff member completed a control study on occupational exposure to radiofrequency (RF) electromagnetic energy (EME) and brain cancer. This work formed part of his PhD through Monash University. The study, which found there was no association between occupational exposure to radiofrequency (RF) electromagnetic energy (EME) and brain cancer, was published in the international, peer-reviewed medical journal *BMJ: Is occupational exposure to radiofrequency electromagnetic fields associated with glioma risk? An Australian population-based family case-control study* (<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/16/3/e107281.full>).

Ionising radiation and health

ARPANSA scientists also contributed to a new international report that found natural sources continue to make up the majority of the global population's exposure to ionising radiation. The findings were published in the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) latest scientific annex, 'Evaluation of public exposure to ionizing radiation' (https://www.unscear.org/unscear/en/publications/2024_2.html), provides the most comprehensive global assessment to date of radiation doses received by the public from natural and artificial sources. Australia is

one of the 31 Member States of UNSCEAR that oversee, review and approve the publication of UNSCEAR reports.

Provide emergency preparedness and response systems for a radiological or nuclear incident

Emergency Preparedness

ARPANSA continued to support the Commonwealth, states and territories on emergency preparedness and response port entry processes during a nuclear-powered warship visit. ARPANSA conducted radiation monitoring at HMAS Stirling during a nuclear-powered warship visit in line with Visiting Ships Panel (Nuclear) arrangements.

ARPANSA established its Radiological Emergency Coordination Centre (RECC) at ALERT status in late February under the Australian Government Radiological and Nuclear Events Plan. This work supports the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade by ensuring the safety of Australians and Australian interests in the US–Israel and Iran War. The RECC remained at WATCHING status after 18 March 2026 for the rest of the reporting period.

Promote patient safety in radiotherapy and diagnostic radiology

Medical Imaging

In 2025, ARPANSA's National Diagnostic Reference Level Service (NDRLS) received 5,792 surveys from 722 CT scanners across Australia. This equates to approximately 40% of all scanners in the country. NDRLS surveys, completed by participating imaging facilities, collect data on patient dose from ionising radiation in diagnostic imaging, particularly for CT. The DRLs provide a point of comparison, so a given imaging facility can compare their practice with that of their peers. This helps to avoid excessive radiation dose to patients from medical imaging.

Summary statistics for this data are now available on the ARPANSA website:
www.arpansa.gov.au/research-and-expertise/surveys/national-diagnostic-reference-level-service/mdct/statistics.

Ensure protection of people and the environment through efficient and effective regulation

Significant regulatory activities

ARPANSA issued one new facility licence during the quarter. The new licence is for the Department of Home Affairs (HA) to possess and control a mobile linear accelerator (prescribed radiation facility). The linear accelerator will be used by the Australian Border Force (ABF) at the Melbourne Container Examination Facility. See 'Facilities licensed under Part 5 of the ARPANS Act' for further information.

Approvals

ARPANSA reviews and issues approvals, where appropriate, for certain controlled activities. This quarter, ARPANSA's approvals included 2 new licences, 2 applications to amend licences, and 5 changes following review, including:

- the issuing of a new prescribed radiation facility licence to the Department of Home Affairs
- the issuing of a source licence to Western Sydney International Airport to deal with security scanners
- The amendment of a Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) licence to include dealing with a handheld X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analyser. This will be used to support research and will enhance scientific voyage capabilities
- The amendment of a licence for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to include a handheld backscatter X-ray security inspection system.

Inspections

ARPANSA conducted 5 inspections this quarter, including 2 facilities and 3 source licences. ARPANSA's inspection program is used to monitor compliance with the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998* and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Regulations 2018. The inspection report findings assist each licence holder to meet their compliance requirements and attain high safety standards by benchmarking against international best practice.

Radioactive material import and export permits

The import and export of radioactive material to and from Australia requires permission under Regulation 4R of the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956 and Regulation 9AD of the Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations 1958. Under these regulations, ARPANSA officers are authorised to issue import and export permits.

Permits issued this quarter:

Type of permits	Urgent (Single shipment)	Standard (Single shipment)	12 months
Import of non-medical radioisotope	32	37	3
Import of medical radioisotope	0	86	9
Export of high activity source	0	8	0

Transport of radioactive material

ARPANSA has revalidated an overseas Type B package design for use in Australia. The package will be used by Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), and a validation certificate has been issued to ANSTO.

Details of directions given by the Minister under section 16 of the Act

No directions were given by the Minister under section 16 of the Act.

Details of directions given by the CEO under section 41 of the Act

No directions were given by the CEO under section 41 of the Act.

Details of improvement notices given by inspectors under section 80A of the Act

No improvement notices were issued under section 80A of the Act.

Details of any breach of licence conditions by a licensee

There were 10 breaches with significant safety or security implications during this quarter:

- ANSTO, under the Waste Operations section licence, was found to be in breach of 4 sections of the ARPANS Regulations. These relate to preventing and minimising human error and organisational failures (section 57A); failing to comply with plans and arrangements (section 60); failing to review plans and arrangements (section 61); and failing to seek approval to make a safety significant change (section 63). The breaches related to the storage of legacy waste and were identified in an inspection following the self-reporting of an unauthorised construction activity. ARPANSA is closely monitoring related activities and will consider further regulatory intervention, as required.
- ANSTO's Actinide Suite was found to be in breach for failure to manage safety related to legacy material contained in gloveboxes (section 60). The breach was identified in an inspection following self-reporting of a previously unidentified risk and was the subject of an improvement notice issued in September 2025. ARPANSA is not intending to pursue any other formal enforcement action regarding this matter.
- The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry failed to maintain effective control of baggage X-ray units (licence condition 2). This resulted in the unintentional minor radiation exposure to a member of the public, and was self-reported by the licence holder. Actions have been taken and the breach is considered closed.
- ARPANSA's Teletherapy Laboratory facility failed to carry out an annual security exercise in accordance with Radiation Protection Series 11, and as required by Regulation 59. This breach was identified during a routine inspection. Annual exercises ensure response readiness to any potential incidents and provide an opportunity to identify potential enhancements to the response. The breach is open. ARPANSA was also found to not have followed their plans and arrangements – as required under section 60 of the regulations – by following an unapproved change management process and not achieving the frequency of the meetings of the Radiation Safety Committee against stipulations. The breach, which was identified during a routine inspection, was considered significant, as following such processes enables a licence holder to assure internal checks and balances on safety. Actions have been taken by the licence holder, and the breach is considered closed.
- ANSTO Gamma Technology Research Irradiator (GATRI) facility failed to carry out an annual security exercise in accordance with Radiation Protection Series 11, and as required by Regulation 59. These breaches were identified during routine inspections. Annual exercises ensure response readiness to any potential incidents and provides an opportunity to identify potential enhancements to the response. The facility also failed to comply with facility licence conditions (section 63 of the regulations), namely a change of an interlock that was implemented without prior approval from the CEO of ARPANSA. The approvals process enables ARPANSA to independently verify that

changes to structures, systems, components and processes meet safety requirements before they are operational. These breaches remain open.

Facilities licensed under Part 5 of the ARPANS Act

This quarter, ARPANSA issued a facility licence to the Department of Home Affairs (HA) following a thorough independent review and assessment (including a public notice). The new licence allows HA to possess and control a prescribed radiation facility, specifically a mobile linear accelerator (linac). The linac will be used by the ABF at the Melbourne Container Examination Facility to safely see inside shipping containers and large cargo for potentially hidden or dangerous items. The new facility will help to protect Australia's border by enhancing the detection of prohibited or border-controlled goods as they cross the border.

If required, further licensing stages will be made under subsequent applications. More information is available on the ARPANSA website at: www.arpansa.gov.au/notice-intention-make-decision-facility-licence-application-2.

The operations of the Council and Committees

Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council

The Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council (the Council) met on 25 - 26 March 2026 in Melbourne.

The Council discussed matters including: a letter from the member to represent the interests of the general public regarding both nuclear proliferation and the Therapeutic Goods Administration position on sunscreen testing; continued discussion of previously received correspondence from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR); draft letters of advice on both Sustainability in Radiation Protection, and Waste Recycling/Minerals Reprocessing for Theranostics; the use of the Linear No-Threshold model in radiation regulation; a draft advisory note regarding the use of potassium iodide during a radiological emergency; and new and emerging issues in radiation protection (including both artificial intelligence and laser welding).

Minutes of previous Council meetings are available on the website (<https://www.arpansa.gov.au/rhsac>). The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for the 21 - 22 July 2026.

Reports to the CEO from the Council under paragraph 20(f) of the Act

Two letters of advice were produced by Council in this quarter:

- Council Advice to the CEO on Sustainability and Radiation Protection in Australia
- Council Advice to the CEO on Minerals Reprocessing and Radium Waste for Theranostics

Council statements are available on the website (<https://www.arpansa.gov.au/rhsac>).

Radiation Health Committee

The Radiation Health Committee (the RHC) met on 3 - 4 March 2026 in Hobart.

The RHC discussed items including: its draft workplan and key priorities for 2026; the International Atomic Energy Agency document development process; the progress in preparing new and revised Radiation Protection Series documents, including those relating to fixed and portable radiation gauges and non-medical human imaging; efforts in support of a national glossary of terms in radiation protection; jurisdictional approaches to radiation regulation; regulation of cosmetic uses of non-ionising radiation; CSIRO's activities regarding radioactive waste management; Council advice regarding National Workforce Competency Frameworks for the Safe Use of Radiation Sources; and the management of radon exposure.

Minutes of previous RHC meetings are available on the website (<https://www.arpansa.gov.au/rhc>). The next meeting of the RHC is scheduled for the 17 - 18 June 2026 in Melbourne.

Nuclear Safety Committee

The Nuclear Safety Committee met on 18 - 19 March 2026 in Melbourne.

The Committee considered a range of matters, including updates on regulatory oversight of controlled facilities. This included progress on actions arising from an ANSTO Actinide Suite improvement notice and breaches related to legacy waste risks at ANSTO. A committee working group will provide advice to the CEO on the CEO's proposed regulatory interventions addressing the breaches related to the storage of legacy waste by April 2026. Members also agreed to contribute out-of-session input to support a review of ARPANSA's graded approach to regulation.

The minutes of NSC meetings are available on the ARPANSA website (www.arpansa.gov.au/nsc). The next meeting of the NSC is scheduled for the 3 - 4 June 2026 in Melbourne.

There were no reports to the CEO from the NSC under paragraph 26(1)(d) of the Act.