The Electromagnetic Energy Reference Group (EMERG) met on 14 May 2014 at ARPANSA’s Sydney office. EMERG comprises representatives from the community and industry as well as representatives from relevant government agencies and academic organisations.

**RF Review**

The Report by the ARPANSA Radiofrequency Expert Panel on the Review of Radiofrequency Health Effects Research – Scientific Literature 2000-2012 was published as an ARPANSA Technical Report on 14 March 2014 (http://www.arpansa.gov.au/pubs/technicalreports/tr164.pdf). The overall conclusion of the report was that the exposure limits in the ARPANSA Radiofrequency (RF) Exposure Standard continue to provide a high degree of protection against the known health effects of RF electromagnetic fields. ARPANSA is mapping out a process to review the ARPANSA Standard over the next year taking into account updated guidance from the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) which are expected to be published at the end of 2014/start of 2015.

Member views on the RF Review and its implications included:

- The process of reviewing the Standard is slow and the influence of public concern in the process is questionable.
- Research should be directly related to standards i.e. investigate threshold levels further.
- The review is comprehensive and does not indicate any compelling rationale for the review of the ARPANSA standard, subject to the outcomes of ICNIRP and WHO discussions.
- Support for the process to review the RF Standard.
- It’s questionable whether the WHO Environmental Health Criteria (EHC) will address research gaps.
- Support for waiting for WHO and ICNIRP before revising the Standard.
- Concern regarding possible unknown effects particularly long-term low level effects.
- Disappointment towards the conclusion of the report of no established effects when there are sensitive people that report a variety of effects.

**Precaution**

A discussion paper prepared by ARPANSA on A Precautionary Approach and Advice to Community on Exposure to Radiofrequency Fields was tabled. The paper analysed the current regulation of RF fields, the uncertainty of RF and risk perception, the concept of precaution and how it is currently applied in Australia and what information and advice is disseminated to the community.

Another paper prepared by a community member on the ARPANSA RF Standard and the need for additional precautionary measures was tabled. The paper mentioned that although the Standard is adequate in addressing known effects it does not provide protection against possible long-term low level effects. The paper also mentioned that the recent classification of RF fields
as a possible carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer is another reason why there is a need to take a serious precautionary approach on this issue.

There was a round table discussion on precaution and member views included:

• Precaution to protect the public is justified and specific precautionary measures should be applied.
• A precautionary approach is not currently being adopted and the community is not being heard. Precautionary limits should be adopted in the Standard.
• Precaution is currently addressed through the ARPANSA Standard and the Communication Alliance Mobile Phone Base Station Deployment Code (C564:2011). ARPANSA should be careful in extending precaution and precautionary limits may hinder technology advancement.
• Support for ARPANSA’s advice on the issue of precaution. The exposure limits in the Standard should not be undermined by precautionary measures.
• Precaution is currently addressed through the conservatism of the ARPANSA Standard and the Communication Alliance Code. There is scope for additional information to be provided rather than more regulation.
• A precautionary approach could have negative impacts in society. A common sense approach based on scientific evidence is required.
• Praise for the stakeholder engagement on precaution and precautionary approaches can have positive impacts in society.

ARPANSA will develop, over the next 12 months, a clear whole-of-Government policy on the precautionary approach for application by the community on exposure to RF fields. ARPANSA will engage government and other stakeholders including EMERG to develop this policy and guidance.

ARPANSA Preliminary smart meter measurements

WHO Environmental Health Criteria and International Advisory Committee meetings
A summary of the WHO meetings was provided to EMERG members on 20 December 2013.

Progress of the WHO EHC Monograph
Reviews for specific subject areas have been submitted and the Monograph is likely to be published at the end of 2014 or start of 2015.

Further inquiry to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare regarding the cost to society from brain tumour incidence
It was agreed that ARPANSA would request the Chief Medical Officer of Australia to enquire whether the AIHW has more recent data on health system expenditures on cancer, to follow the “Health system expenditures on cancer and other neoplasms in Australia 2000-01”. It was also agreed that more data would be gathered in order to develop the right question on cancer costs for the AIHW.

Cordless phone exposure levels
It appears that there is no new information on cordless phone exposure levels since 2011. ARPANSA is currently planning its measurement program and there is a possibility of including an assessment of more recent models of cordless phones as well as other RF sources.

A community member mentioned that people are reporting more symptoms when they are close to the base station of more recent models of cordless phones. It was agreed that the community
member will send information on cordless phone exposures and ARPANSA will provide guidance.

Research activities on electromagnetic hypersensitivity

The Australian Centre for Electromagnetic Bioeffects Research (ACEBR) will be addressing some issues concerning electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS). Its investigations will include looking at premorbid differences between EHS individuals and controls, provocation studies in EHS, and assessment of the role of thermoregulatory changes in EHS individuals in response to RF exposure. The protocol of the EHS study will be discussed with interested EMERG members so as to ensure that the research is aware of as many issues as possible and will be finalised by August 2014, with testing expected to commence in December 2014.

It was agreed that ACEBR would liaise with ARPANSA for potential access to individuals from the EMR Health Complaints Register for the EHS study.

Revised EMERG Terms of Reference

The EMERG Terms of Reference were revised following comments from members and were signed off by the ARPANSA CEO. They are available on the ARPANSA website http://www.arpansa.gov.au/AboutUs/Committees/emerg.cfm.

EMERG membership

ARPANSA is planning to review the current EMERG membership in the next few months. Participation in EMERG will focus on members with a combination of skills, networks and interests that benefit the objectives of the group.

It was agreed that ARPANSA would contact members on the application process and for suggestions of other suitable individuals or organisations to apply.

ARPANSA’s EMR program

EMERG was informed that ARPANSA had undergone some re-structural changes however the work on EMR issues will continue. ARPANSA will continue the following:
- Measurement of exposures to public, workers and environment.
- Assessment and communication on risks to public, workers and environment.
- Develop and implement international best practice guidance.

EMERG Annual Action Plan

It was agreed that ARPANSA will prepare an annual action plan for EMERG and circulate it to members for comment. It was also agreed that ARPANSA will establish an online forum for EMERG to get input from members on various issues.

Accessibility of information on the ARPANSA website

Concern was expressed that the information on the recent ARPANSA technical report on measurements of a smart meter was not at an appropriate level for lay readers. It was indicated that the ARPANSA fact sheet on smart meters was recently updated with useful easy-to-read information for the public. ARPANSA is planning to review its web content so it is more accessible for the public.

Research activities update

The NHMRC is currently establishing a joint working committee with ARPANSA to review the Research Agenda section of the WHO Environmental Health Criteria on RF fields. This will assist the NHMRC/ARPANSA in influencing the international research agenda to ensure it is
relevant to the Australian situation.

Current and planned research at ACEBR includes:
- The Royal Australian Navy Job Exposure Matrix study – measuring the RF levels of sailors and classifying exposure for different work titles.
- Electroencephalogram (EEG) Thermal research - first study results expected later in the year
- RF and Alzheimer’s disease in mice – will likely begin in 2015
- Cancer incidence in Australia study – results are expected mid-2015
- Risk perception study – first results expected in late 2014
- RF-induced micro-thermal changes – completed by end of 2014

The Monash Centre for Research Excellence (CRE) looking mainly at RF and population health has completed requisite administration and is ready to start its research program.

**Industry activities update**

An update on the following industry activities was provided:
- Intense rollout of Long-Term Evolution (LTE) technology – mostly upgrading old sites but also constructing new ones.
- Mobile black spot programme – delivering mobile phone coverage in rural areas and small communities
- The revised Environmental EME report format for mobile phone base stations has started to appear for new and upgraded sites.
- ACMA has audited 518 mobile phone sites – there were no non-compliances, but 16 sites did have issues with regard to documentation.

There is a planned meeting between the ARPANSA and AMTA CEOs to discuss relevant issues.

**Regulatory activities update (Sunsetting of ACMA EME instruments)**

ACMA is proposing to remake the following regulatory instruments which are due to sunset in 2015:
- Radiocommunications (Electromagnetic Radiation — Human Exposure) Standard 2003 (Human Exposure Standard); and
- Radiocommunications (Compliance Labelling — Electromagnetic Radiation) Notice 2003 (EME Labelling Notice).

As part of the process ACMA sought public comment which closed on 2 May 2014 and received about twenty submissions. ACMA will provide an update on progress at future meetings.

**Request for additional agenda items**

EMERG was informed that a member of the public requested issues related to the ICNIRP Guidelines and the protection of sensitive members of the community to be included in the agenda of the meeting. ARPANSA had responded to the member of the public directly, informing him that his question would not be included as a specific item on the EMERG agenda but the issues raised would be considered as part of the discussion on precaution and future updates to the RF Standard.

**Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held sometime in November 2014.