



Australian Government

Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council

SUMMARY OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21-22 AUGUST 2014

The Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council (Council) met at ARPANSA's offices in Miranda, NSW.

Confirmation of Minutes of the 3-4 April 2014 Meeting

The Minutes of the 3-4 April 2014 meeting were confirmed with no changes.

Business arising from the Minutes and Correspondence

Members noted items on the action list that had been resolved and updates were provided for ongoing actions. Members noted the tabled correspondence.

Council's Strategic Directions

Members reviewed the proposed changes to Council's Mission, Vision, Values, Strategic Goals and Strategic Directions that were discussed at the previous meeting. Members agreed to a number of minor changes to provide better clarification and to further highlight the communication between the Council and the Radiation Health Committee (RHC) and the Nuclear Safety Committee (NSC).

Presentation from Members of the Public

Two members of the public made a presentation to inform Council of their concerns about the potential risk of long term, low level exposure to Electro-Magnetic Radiation (EMR) or Energy (EME). They made a number of recommendations to Council, particularly in relation to the current EME exposure standard RPS3, the state of scientific research in this area and the application of the Precautionary Principle.

Members thanked the presenters for their attendance and presentations. Further dialogue and working together to achieve the common goal of protection of children was encouraged. The Chair affirmed that Council will consider their presentation and will respond to their questions and recommendations in writing. He noted that RPS3 is currently under review and also that ARPANSA's EME Reference Group (EMERG) may be an appropriate forum where these issues could be discussed in more detail.

Report from Council Member representing the Interests of the General Public

Members received a report from the Council Member representing the interests of the general public. This outlined submissions from the community on a number of issues including smart meters, WiFi in schools and radioactive waste management. Members supported continuing to invite members of the public to speak at Council meetings.

Committee Reports

Members noted and discussed the draft Minutes of the recent meetings of the Radiation Health and Nuclear Safety Committees.

DS460 – Communication and Consultation with Interested Parties by the Regulatory Body. IAEA Draft Safety Guide

Members received a report on the draft IAEA Safety Guide DS460 which will be released for Member State comment in September. Members agreed this was an important document and that Council should review it and provide feedback to ARPANSA that can be passed on to the IAEA.

Draft Council Statement on the Linear No-Threshold approach

Members reviewed the draft Council Statement on the application of the Linear No Threshold (LNT) approach in radiation protection. Following careful discussion, Members agreed that considering all of the available evidence, LNT remains a useful and practical framework for radiation protection. Members agreed that the current draft document should be revised with a view to making a clear Council Statement on LNT preferably for approval at the next meeting of Council.

Synergies of Approaches to Ionising and Non-ionising radiation protection

Members were updated on the work being undertaken at ARPANSA to develop a common framework for non-ionising radiation (NIR) protection with the aim of developing a fundamentals document for NIR based on the new ARPANSA Fundamentals document (RPS1) for ionising radiation (IR). Members welcomed the presentation and were supportive of further work in this area.

Reports on International Engagement

Members noted the tabled reports on recent international visits and forums attended by ARPANSA Staff and Council Members.

Precautionary Principle – Review of 2002 advice to CEO

Members noted the previous advice published by Council and ARPANSA on the Precautionary Principle and agreed that as previous Council advice on this matter is now twelve years old the advice should be reviewed and updated. Members discussed the merits of both a single page statement about the Precautionary Principle and a longer, more detailed document, and agreed to attempt to produce a short document designed to communicate Council's understanding of the Precautionary Principle to the public.

Code for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material

Council reviewed the updated Code for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material that has been prepared by the Radiation Health Committee and recommended that the CEO of ARPANSA adopt the Code.

Site Visit to a mobile base station site

Members were briefed by representatives from the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) on the protections in place at mobile telecommunications radio base station sites ("towers") in Australia and of the information on these sites that is available to the public. Members then visited the Westfield Miranda mobile base station site. AMTA representatives pointed out the site features and demonstrated the process for taking live readings of EME levels at the site.

ARPANSA Exposure Guidelines and Industry Compliance

Members discussed the processes in place to ensure that industry complies with RPS3. The level of information provided in Australia is highly advanced in both quality and accessibility compared to most other countries. AMTA emphasised that the current detail of information available to the public is made possible by the mobile telecommunications carriers' commitment to sharing information.

Members discussed the need to set safety limits for EME based on scientific information, noting that when limits are arbitrary the focus moves to compliance rather than optimisation. Precaution and radiation protection are best driven by actively addressing safety rather than by just meeting limits. The Chair thanked the AMTA representatives for their briefing and for organising the site visit for Members.

Audit Commission Report

The CEO of ARPANSA informed Council of the outcome of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Report on Regulation of Commonwealth Radiation and Nuclear Activities and advised that ARPANSA has agreed to implement the recommendations of the report in full. The Report is available on the ARPANSA website.

ARPANSA Corporate Plan

The CEO of ARPANSA informed Council that the ARPANSA Corporate Plan would be launched in the week following the meeting and will be made available on the ARPANSA website.

Arrangements for next triennium

Members were advised that expressions of interest for the next triennium of Council are now closed.

Meeting Close

The meeting closed at 12:55pm on 22 August 2014. The next meeting was scheduled for 13-14 November 2014. The location is still to be confirmed, but will be in either Canberra or Sydney.