



**Australian Government**

**Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council**

## **STATEMENT ON THE MANAGEMENT OF RISKS IN THE TRANSPORT OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL IN AUSTRALIA**

Each year in Australia, many thousands of packages containing radioactive material are transported around the country. ARPANSA's *Code of Practice for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material (2008)* (the Transport Code) is consistent with international best practice and stipulates the requirements to be met when consigning and transporting such material.

As part of Council's on-going activities it recently examined the transport of radioactive material in Australia.

Overall when compliant with the Transport Code, there is a low probability of an incident or accident occurring and a low potential for any consequential harm. The level of risk associated with the transport of radioactive material in Australia is therefore considered to be low.

Data collected over many years and scientific assessment provides confirmation and reassurance that the risk associated with the transport of radioactive materials is low. The Council acknowledges that the public perception of risk from the transport of radioactive materials may be substantially different and that transport of radioactive material can be perceived as carrying a high risk. Elevated levels of concern among some members of the public may reflect specific values or a lack of confidence in those responsible for the transport of radioactive material. This may also result from poor communication of radiation risks in general and risks associated with the transport of radiation material in particular.

The Council recognises the importance of and fully supports risk-informed decision-making. No human activity is entirely free of risk. In a mature society, the responsible approach is to identify and manage the risks to keep them as low as reasonably achievable. Key stakeholders and members of the public should be kept fully informed and their views considered so that radiological risks can be identified and weighed in an open and transparent manner.

The focus should be on making the transport of radioactive materials as safe as possible. The Council therefore considers that:

- Radioactive material should be transported along routes or by means that have been identified as appropriate based on fully risk informed decision making, after considering in a balanced way all of the risks associated with the transport of radioactive materials.
- The Australian public should be provided accessible avenues by which it can be fully informed regarding the nature and effects of radioactive materials transportation to ensure their own safety, including decisions to be made in the event of an incident or accident occurring. Those affected need to be fully aware of the safety measures to take and who to inform and trust to ensure a safe outcome.
- The public and other stakeholders should be confident they have access to the best data and advice that the Australian and international radiation protection community can offer and that their views and input are taken into consideration in relation to the safe and secure transport of radioactive material.

December 2013