



OFFICIAL

Meeting Summary

Date	10-11 August 2023
Time	10:00 AM - 4:00 PM (Day 1), 9:30 AM – 2:00 PM (Day 2)
Location	Australian Parliament House, Reps Committee Room 1R2
Present	Dr Jane Canestra (Chair), Dr Gillian Hirth, Mr Keith Baldry, Mr John Piispanen, Dr Christine Connors, Mr Chris Donovan, Assoc. Prof. Mel Taylor, Emeritus Prof. Pam Sykes, Ms Melissa Holzberger, Mr Jim Hondros, Mr Stuart Parr, Assoc. Prof. Catherine Olsen, Mr Chris Perry.
Invitees	Assistant Minister Ged Kearney MP, CDRE Guy Holthouse, Dr Roger Allison, Assoc. Prof. Ivan Williams, Dr Peter Johnston, Mr Jim Scott, Ms Helen Grinbergs, Mr Matt Flint, Mr Stephen Bouwhuis, Mr Nathan Wahl, Ms Kathryn Scully, Ms Min Ku, Mr John Kenny, Ms Edel Doyle.
Apologies	N/A
Secretariat	Dr Adrian Hawley, Mr James Wheaton.

Meeting Opening

The Chair opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of country. No additional conflicts of interest were declared. One action was noted as outstanding from previous meetings. The previous minutes were noted as finalised.

The Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, The Hon Ged Kearney MP, attended to welcome the Council and new members recently appointed. The Minister thanked outgoing members for their service, particularly Dr Roger Allison for a decade of service as Chair and highlighted ARPANSA's important work to protect Australians and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation.

Health Industry impacts of National Uniformity

The Council considered challenges described by industry representatives operating across multiple Australian jurisdictions in health industry applications of radiation such as medical imaging and nuclear medicine, demonstrating the impact of a lack of National Uniformity in regulatory requirements on their work and Healthcare delivery in Australia.

Three professional viewpoints were presented to the Council, highlighting specific examples in which radiation protection is regulated differently in each Australian state or territory and the implications for end users. This included from a professional radiographer, a representative from the Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy (ASMIRT), and a radiation shielding consultant.

Issues considered included comparisons to the federated arrangements of the European Union, patient referral guidelines, consistency in radiation dose limits, cost incentives, medical physicist oversight, Automatic Mutual Recognition, and differences in radiation equipment, protective shielding, and safety signage requirements.

Task: The Council agreed to consider a report at the next meeting on a trial of 'iRefer' referral guidelines in the Alfred hospital.

Task: ARPANSA to provide a summary of what standard/s are currently in place for shielding and construction.

Task: Council to consider recommending a review of shielding and construction standards, to identify national uniformity issues.

Task: Council to consider establishing a working group on shielding to look at gaps, possible solutions, approaching industry who are recognised as having significant expertise in this area.

Handover of issues from the previous term of Council

The Council acknowledged the outgoing Chair, Dr Roger Allison, for his long service and personal contributions to ARPANSA. He provided a summary of key topics carried over from the previous term of Council, including radiation protection in the context of workforce challenges, First Nations engagement, emergency management, laser technology, and ultraviolet radiation (skin cancers). Central issues noted were national uniformity in radiation protection, the need for legislative review, regulatory independence, and ARPANSA's open and transparent role in public communication.

ARPANSA's CEO noted ongoing Australian Government efforts to develop a national strategy for nuclear and radiation training which is broader than work on nuclear-powered submarines, as workforce capacity is a key issue. The nuclear submarine program is likely to draw workers out of other radiation work areas impacting other fields, such as the rollout of new medical radiation technology.

The Council discussed examples of positive First Nations engagement, and sought to discuss further at the next meeting, drawing from other experiences in Australia. ARPANSA undertook to provide an update on its collaboration with Monash University to investigate the public health impact of cosmetic non-ionising radiation (NIR) procedures. The Council separately noted the impact of UV radiation and skin cancer as a chronic issue with significant cost to healthcare in Australia.

Task: ARPANSA to provide an update on its project on cosmetic NIR procedure health impacts.

Task: Council to consider establishment of a working group on forming advice on UV and skin cancers and cancer registry.

ARPANSA Strategic direction post budget

ARPANSA's CEO gave an overview of key priorities for ARPANSA following the release of the FY23-24 budget, including support to the nuclear-powered submarine program. Topical issues for Council's consideration which intersect with ARPANSA's work program including skin cancer prevention initiatives, establishment of the national centre for disease control (CDC), a review of the Australian government crisis management framework, a review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and establishment of a national environment protection agency, and ongoing monitoring and advice in relation to the war in Ukraine.

The CEO undertook to provide Council with her views about which of ARPANSA's own specific activities in radiation protection and nuclear safety would benefit most from Council's advice.

Task: ARPANSA CEO to provide a summary of which ARPANSA activities in radiation safety would benefit most from Council's advice.

Task: ARPANSA to advise on the proposed timeline for establishment of a national EPA.

Member representing the interests of the general public

The new member representing the interests of the general public introduced their background, noting particular interests in workforce as well as work, health and safety matters. Standing agenda item, to be expanded if necessary, depending on whether public concerns have been received.

Council discussion of National Uniformity

The Council discussed the broader issues of national uniformity in radiation protection, in addition to those in the health industry discussed above, such as in transport, mining, diagnostics, non-destructive testing (NDT), emergency management, workforce mobility, and incident reporting. The Council noted the 1997 report from Dr James McNulty AO, former Commissioner of Public Health in WA, on a proposal to achieve national uniformity, and discussed what barriers currently exist to implementing national uniformity.

Various regulatory requirements across Australia were highlighted, as were the different rates of legislative updates. The current approach of agreeing standards via a National Directory for Radiation Protection was noted as lacking legal enforceability, and significant workforce capacity issues were noted as inhibiting efforts to achieve consistency. The Council noted the importance of defining outcomes, such as consistent access to healthcare, sufficient workforce, sufficient radiation protection, to guide any work to promote national uniformity.

The Council also noted the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (DOHAC) current review of national uniformity in radiation protection, and related work to finalise a National Strategy for Radiation Safety. The Council discussed Australia's nuclear-powered submarine program as a significant catalyst to review and examine different options for improving national uniformity. DOHAC undertook to also consult the Council and other stakeholders the Council might recommend.

Task: The Department of Health and Aged Care will provide the Council with a copy of the terms of reference for the review of national uniformity in radiation protection.

Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR)

The Council considered a paper on the priority and imperative to critically review the adequacy of Australia's radiation and nuclear emergency preparedness and response capability. The Council discussed national issues, concerns, and opportunities to improve emergency management for radiological events, acknowledging that State and Territory jurisdictions have primary responsibility to protect life, property and environment under emergency management arrangements in Australia.

The Council discussed the infrequency of radiological incidents which trigger an active response having led to infrequent testing of response arrangements, with the example of the loss of a single small radioactive-source capsule in January 2023 highlighting that individual jurisdictions have limited capacity and demonstrated capability to independently manage such incidents.

The Council also discussed that there is minimal knowledge or training on radiological emergency response and radiation injuries for the medical workforce which currently uses radiological applications, and none for non-radiological health medical workforce. There is also limited relevant laboratory and sample testing capability and capacity in Australia for a radiation incident response.

The Council noted that the *Australian Clinical Guidelines for Radiological Emergencies 2012* are due for revision, acknowledging that the Australian government is currently reviewing the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework.

Task: Establish a working group to draft a letter of advice to the CEO of ARPANSA on emergency preparedness and response for radiological and nuclear emergencies.

Recent activities of ARPANSA - CEO Update

The CEO of ARPANSA gave the Council an update on the recent activities of the agency, including the Nuclear Safety Committee (NSC) and Radiation Health Committee (RHC).

The NSC met in Sydney on 20 July 2023. It discussed preparations for the upcoming 2023 Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) Follow-Up Mission to Australia, and updates on regulatory matters related to the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO). The term of the current NSC ends on 31 December 2023 and the process to establish the next term are underway.

The Council discussed Australia's low-level waste management, noting the outcome on Tuesday 18 July 2023 of litigation relating to the Australian Radioactive Waste Agency (ARWA) proposal for a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF) and the Australian Government's announcement to not appeal the finding. Council sought an update from ARWA for its next meeting.

ARPANSA noted the passing of the 'Defence Legislation Amendment (Naval Nuclear Propulsion) Bill 2023' into law, which amends the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998* and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to enable the CEO of ARPANSA to exercise regulatory powers regarding naval nuclear propulsion, without disturbing the moratorium on civilian nuclear power. ARPANSA continues to support work on a second tranche of legislation to establish an Australian Nuclear-Powered Submarine Safety Regulator (ANPSSR).

ARPANSA presented a summary of public and media enquiries received so far in 2023, noting very low numbers of media enquiries on regulation and waste related to the AUKUS announcement.

UN Sustainable Development Goals in Radiation Protection

The Council received a presentation on the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals apply to radiation protection. It noted the upcoming International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, Decommissioning, Environmental Protection and Remediation: Ensuring Safety and Enabling Sustainability. The recent *South Australian Radiation Protection and Control Act 2021* was noted as an example of how sustainable development and public benefit can be included in radiation protection legislation.

Task: The Council requested an update on outcomes following the IAEA conference.

Task: ARPANSA to report back to Council on discussions related to the UN sustainable development

goals from the upcoming International Commission for Radiological Protection (ICRP) Symposium and any other ARPANSA updates related to this topic.

Workforce - Radiation Protection

A Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet representative attended for a broader discussion on the challenges of building a future radiation protection workforce. This included the growing need for an increasing number of radiation protection workers, strong competition nationally for radiation protection workers, and ensuring sufficient workforce for practitioners and regulators while managing conflicts of interest. The Council noted the need for a coordinated national approach.

The Council noted that there are critical skills gaps which may be applicable to multiple workforce roles and there is an opportunity for radiation training to be of broad benefit to many industries. It also noted the need to ensure that courses are certified, to create alignment between course content and workforce readiness.

Update from Australasian Radiation Protection Society (ARPS)

The President of the Australasian Radiation Protection Society presented an update on the activities of ARPS, including work on co-accreditation between ARPS and the UK Society for Radiation Protection (SRP), an ARPS national strategy for practitioner development, discussions around competencies with the Australasian Radiation Protection Accreditation Board (ARPAB), preparations for the ARPS Annual Conference in October 2023, and IRPA 2032.

Other Business

The Council noted that it would consider out-of-session whether there is any need for a submission on legislative proposals currently out for public consultation. It noted an upcoming United Nations Special Rapporteur visit to Australia, and the receipt of a letter to Council regarding 5G. The next meeting was set for 11-12 December 2023.