



30 July 2024

Dr Gillian Hirth
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency
619 Lower Plenty Rode
YALLAMBIE VICTORIA 3085

RADIATION HEALTH COMMITTEE (RHC)

Dear Dr Hirth,

The Radiation Health Committee (RHC), as a statutory advisory body to the CEO, discussed areas of collaboration between the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) and jurisdictional radiation regulators at its meeting in December 2023. This and subsequent discussions have considered which collaborative activities are important to radiation regulation in Australia across Commonwealth, State and Territory jurisdictions, including those activities which promote national uniformity. This letter sets out the key activities below.

All jurisdictions contribute to information sharing and provide expert advice on radiation protection and safety, including regulation for these purposes. ARPANSA's contributions to these efforts are facilitated through its statutory roles to support the RHC, and to promote uniformity of radiation protection and nuclear safety policy and practices across all jurisdictions. As a trusted source of information, advice and services, ARPANSA also supports social licence nationally.

Key ARPANSA activities

- **Expertise and collaboration** – ARPANSA is a key resource and coordination point in Australia as a centre of expertise and collaboration. It is in a position to monitor national and global issues and trends which provides a knowledge base and underpins advice relevant to radiation safety and protection. ARPANSA is also uniquely placed to maintain technical capabilities and expertise in certain areas. It provides support to Commonwealth, State and Territory jurisdictions to varying degrees in the form regulatory staff to support inspections, advice on complex assessments, and national monitoring capabilities.
- **National codes and standards** – The Radiation Protection Series (RPS) of radiation safety codes, standards and guides are an essential part of the system for radiation regulation in Australia. Since its establishment, ARPANSA through the statutory role of the RHC, with input from industry and specialist experts via working groups as well as public consultation, has supported the ongoing development and revision of the RPS.

- **National profile of shared issues** – ARPANSA’s CEO works to promote radiation protection matters at the national level through multiple channels, such as various National Cabinet committees, networks and forums. This support has brought greater awareness as well as uniformity in radiation safety and protection policy and practices in Australia, such as through the National Directory for Radiation Protection which has become the basis for Australia’s safety framework.
- **Input to international best practice** – ARPANSA is a key conduit for experts to contribute an Australian perspective to best practice on radiation protection. This includes to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and International Commission for Radiological Protection (ICRP). ARPANSA is also a World Health Organization (WHO) collaborating centre for radiation protection. International standards underpin Australia’s RPS codes, standards and guides, and Australian input improves their relevance to local regulations. It also facilitates sharing of knowledge and capabilities held in each Australian jurisdiction.
- **Emergency preparedness and response** – ARPANSA plays a central role in ensuring that Australia has suitable radiological emergency preparedness and response knowledge and capabilities to manage radiological incidents. This includes for national, cross-jurisdictional, and international events from small incidents to large-scale emergencies. ARPANSA also provides high-level capabilities such as in training, measurement support, environmental modelling, information coordination and expert advice to government.

Key opportunities

While recognising the value of the above activities to the Commonwealth, States and Territories, there are opportunities to develop these resources within the current legislative framework. This includes building on existing activities, addressing resource pressures in jurisdictions including through collaborative projects, and investing in key opportunities for national coordination. The RHC believes the following opportunities would provide significant return on further investment.

- **Definitions and terminology** – ARPANSA through its statutory committees could develop a broader system of common language and terminology across all publications, to encourage a consistent national approach and reduce gaps between regulatory frameworks. This has particular merit in the current dynamic Australian regulatory environment. A suite of standards on the minimum data set and terminology could describe types of radiation sources, radiation equipment, and locations. This would also assist with legislative updates.
- **National data sets and compliance standards** – With common definitions and terminology, as well as standard data parameters, ARPANSA should support the functioning of national datasets. This will facilitate interoperability and coordination efforts between all regulators where standardised requirements exist, such as achieving common compliance standards.
- **Competencies and training** – ARPANSA should support, through its committees and publications, the development of national competencies for key roles and functions such as radiation safety officers. This would support skills, training and qualifications for the different roles and functions in the radiation protection industry. This would enhance workforce capability and mobility across the nation. It would provide for consistency of cross-border and licensing/accreditation qualification requirements of jurisdictions.

- **National infrastructure** – the above opportunities will help ARPANSA to maintain national resources such as the Australian Radiation Incident Register and the Australian National Radiation Dose Register, develop new infrastructure such as regulatory administration systems or a national sealed-source register, and support knowledge sharing networks.

The RHC notes that other opportunities exist should there be an appetite for legislative reform, such as areas of radioactive waste management, particularly for disposal facilities and transport.

Conclusion

ARPANSA plays a vital role to promote, support and maintain national approaches to radiation protection. The RHC highlights the above areas as being of particular importance which collectively contribute to transparency and confidence in radiation safety in Australia. Each help to establish social license and an enduring responsive regulatory culture for radiation protection in Australia.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the RHC Secretariat via rhc@arpansa.gov.au.

Kind regards,



Dr Joanna Wriedt
Chair
Radiation Health Committee