



Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

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| Date | 21 November 2024 |
| Time | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM |
| Location | Department of Health Victoria, Room 27.21, 50 Lonsdale St, Melbourne, Victoria; Microsoft Teams. |
| Members | Dr Jane Canestra (Chair), Dr Gillian Hirth (CEO of ARPANSA), Mr Chris Perry, Mr Jim Hondros, Prof Pam Sykes, Ms Melissa Holzberger, Mr Mark Carey and A/Prof Catherine Olsen. |
| Apologies | A/Prof Christine Connors, Mr Stuart Parr, Mr John Piispanen and A/Prof Mel Taylor. |
| Presenters and Observers | Ms Caitlin Waugh (ARPANSA) – Presenter (Virtual, Item 3.1), Mr Rohan Mate (ARPANSA) – Presenter (Virtual, Item 3.2), Mr Simon Critchley (QLD Health) – Presenter (Virtual, Item 3.3), Ms Zoe Thomas (Monash University) – Presenter (Virtual, Item 6), Mr Hayden Page (ARPANSA) – Presenter (Virtual, Item 12), Mr Glenn Riley (DH Victoria) – Observer, Ms Bronwen Adams (DOHAC) – Observer, A/Prof. Ken Karipidis (ARPANSA) – Observer (Virtual, Item 6), Mr Stephen Alexandar (ARPANSA) – Observer (Virtual, Item 12). |
| Secretariat | Mr James Wheaton (Secretariat), Dr Fiona Charalambous and Dr Arne Biesiekierski. (Assistant secretariat). |

1. Meeting Opening and Housekeeping

The Chair acknowledged the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Kulin nation land on which the meeting was held, paying respect to their Elders past and present. The Chair noted the resignation of Associate Professor Mel Taylor and thanked her (in absentia) for her service on the Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council (“the Council”) and wished her well in her new role.

No additional potential conflicts were declared at this meeting. The July 2024 meeting minutes were noted as endorsed and published out of session. The secretariat provided the status of action items from the previous meeting. The Council noted two pieces of correspondence received; the first from Women in Nuclear Australia and the second from the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, to be discussed under agenda items 9.1 and 11 respectively of this meeting.

2. Member representing the interests of the general public

The position of the member representing the interests of the general public remains vacant following the resignation of the sitting member. The recruitment of a new member is expected to be completed in Q1 2025. The CEO tabled the paper from the member representing the interests of the general public for the Radiation Health Committee (RHC), which met on 19-20 November 2024, covering observations on artificial intelligence (AI) and radiation regulation. The CEO spoke to the discussions that took place at the RHC on AI. The CEO also noted the discussions at the Nuclear Safety Committee (NSC) with respect to engagement with the general public and the importance of outreach to explain the role of the regulator in an evolving nuclear regulatory landscape associated with the nuclear submarine program. The Council noted both updates from the CEO and discussed artificial intelligence (AI) noting similar considerations in other forums including at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Commission of the Safety Standards (CSS) and at the Australian Radiation Protection Society and agreed to receive an update on AI from ARPANSA in 2025.

Task: ARPANSA to provide an update on risk and governance in AI from ARPANSA's perspective, in 2025.

Task: Mr Jim Hondros to provide a copy of the Australian Radiation Protection Society's (ARPS) paper on AI when published in the ARPS journal.

3. ARPANSA CEO Update

The CEO of ARPANSA provided an update to the Council on recent ARPANSA activities. These included, but were not limited to: ARPANSA's Reconciliation Action Plan; appearances of ARPANSA in Parliament, along with questions taken on notice; the activities of the Nuclear Safety Committee and Radiation Health Committee; ARPANSA's international engagement; the activities of ARPANSA's regulatory services, medical radiation services, and radiation health services branches; and the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program Implementation with regard to the *Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Act 2024*.

3.1. Media Enquiries Dashboard

ARPANSA presented on recent media enquiries received, noting a sharp increase in the number of enquiries and media mentions in the recent quarter, which was driven by ARPANSA's adoption of a proactive media engagement approach. The most frequent topic of enquiry related to a study showing no link between mobile phone use and brain cancer. Other key topics of enquiry included occupational radiation exposure of medical workers, the update of Australian sunscreen standards, the release of ARPANSA's radio wave exposure study in Melbourne, and the announcement of the Federal Opposition's nuclear power policy.

3.2. Public enquiries dashboard

ARPANSA presented recent public enquiries received through ARPANSA's Talk to a Scientist program. Enquiries received in 2024 were comparable in number to those received by equivalent timeframes in 2022 and 2023. The greatest number of enquiries were received for telecommunications and power infrastructure, followed by personal and occupational exposure to ionising radiation.

4. Items from the Radiation Health Committee

4.1. RHC Letter on National Collaboration

ARPANSA tabled the RHC letter on National collaboration, whereby the CEO of ARPANSA sought the RHC's advice on what ARPANSA activities are considered important by states and territories to national collaboration on radiation safety. The council discussed the RHC letter and agreed to seek member comment out of session as feedback to the CEO, noting the letter is finalised.

Task: Council members to provide specific comments for the CEO of ARPANSA to consider when providing a response to the RHC on its National Collaboration letter.

4.2. Dosimetry Service Provider Standard

The Council discussed the tabled draft Dosimetry Service Provider Standard, which RHC had recommended for publication. Noting that the draft Dosimetry Service Provider Standard would only apply voluntarily to a limited number of dosimetry service providers who had already been directly consulted. Council noted that specific consultation on this standard had been undertaken with key stakeholders who may voluntarily apply the standard, however recommended that the draft still undergo an open public consultation phase before final endorsement from the Council is considered.

Decision: Recommendation that the draft Dosimetry Service Provider Standard should undergo public consultation before any subsequent endorsement from the Council is considered.

Task: ARPANSA to undertake a public consultation of the draft Dosimetry Service Provider Standard.

4.3. Dental Code

The Council discussed the tabled draft Code for Radiation Protection in Dental Exposure (the Dental Code), which the RHC had recommended for publication. The Council endorsed the draft code pending minor corrections which were noted by the RHC working group lead in attendance.

Decision: The Council endorsed the publication of the Dental Code subject to minor corrections.

Task: ARPANSA to publish the Dental Code as part of the Radiation Protection Series.

5. RHC 2025 Workplan

ARPANSA tabled the RHC 2025 Workplan, which was agreed to at RHC on 19 November 2024. The RHC 2025 Workplan considers the findings of a recent analysis of the gap between the existing Radiation Protection Series (RPS) and Australia's current operating landscape, undertaken to identify agency, professional, and jurisdictional priorities. It also considers the resources needed to deliver the work items. Council discussed a range of topics from the RHC 2025 workplan and related considerations such as practitioner consultation, risk analysis of the priorities identified, a need for a public facing document on the RHC work program and how the IAEA CSS review of the long-term structure and plan for the IAEA safety standards aligns with the future RHC workplan. Council also raised whether analysis of the Australian Radiation Incident Register (ARIR) database might contribute to the risk analysis of the priorities identified.

6. Skin Cancer Register Working Group

The Skin Cancer Register working group provided an update on plans to publish the modified form of the background paper to the Council letter of advice to ARPANSA's CEO on the national registration of keratinocyte cancers. The modified paper has been accepted with modification for publication into the Public Health Research and Practice.

7. Non-Ionising Radiation – Cosmetic injury

Ms Zoe Thomas, an ARPANSA-supported PhD student at the Monash University Accident Research Centre, gave an update on the progress of her doctoral research investigating injuries arising from non-ionising radiation used in cosmetic procedures. This update outlined the motivation, existing work, and structure of the investigation, as well as its progress across reviews of literature, regulation, and consumer experiences. The Council noted the presentation and the progress of this research project. Council invited progress on this research project to be presented to Council in 12 months.

Task: Ms Thomas to present to Council on progress on this research project in 12 months.

8. Australian Societies' update

An update was provided on recent Australasian Radiation Protection Society (ARPS) activities and initiatives since the July 2024 Council meeting. The highlight was the outcomes of the ARPS 2024 conference and the strong ARPANSA presence at the conference including the CEO of ARPANSA opening the conference with a Keynote presentation titled *Radiation protection stewardship in a rapidly evolving environment*. Council discussed how to connect the ARPS Young Generation Network with the Royal Society of Victoria Emerging Scientists.

The Chair declared a perceived conflict of interest due to sitting on the Council of the Royal Society of Victoria.

Task: The CEO of ARPANSA to deliver the ARPS 2024 conference keynote presentation to Council members at the next Council meeting in March 2025, or out of session beforehand.

9. Radiation Protection Workforce

Council discussed the direction of its considerations of radiation protection workforce matters going forwards, including writing to specific industry stakeholders on workforce, questioning if there are any issues in retention and recruitment in their specific sectors. The CEO shared the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care's "*Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce – Scope of Practice Review Final Report*" by Independent Reviewer Professor Mark Cormack. The review examined the barriers and incentives health professionals face working to their full scope of practice in primary care. The CEO requested Council to review the report and the areas associated with radiation related Health professionals for discussion at a future meeting.

Council noted that a representative from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) had presented on workforce considerations for radiation and nuclear workers in August 2023 and discussed that it would be useful to receive an update on any developments in 2025, along with presentations from the Department of Defence Nuclear Powered Submarine Regulatory Design team on regulatory training and competency programs for the new workforce in this sector.

Task: Chair to write to specific industry stakeholders on workforce retention and recruitment.

9.1. Women in Nuclear correspondence

Correspondence was received from the President of Woman in Nuclear (WiN) Australia, in response to the letter sent by Council on 9 July 2024. Council noted and discussed the correspondence with three female members of WiN Australia in the room.

Task: The Chair to send a reply to WiN Australia noting Council discussions on the letter.

10. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Environmental Effects Assessment Panel (EEAP)

Council received an update from the Annual Meeting of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Environmental Effects Assessment Panel (EEAP) with a particular focus on the most recent scientific information together with future projections and scenarios, to assess the effects from changes in the ozone layer and from ultraviolet radiation, and their interaction with the climate system, as well as the effects of breakdown products of controlled substances and their alternatives on:

- The biosphere, biodiversity and ecosystem health, including on biogeochemical processes and global cycles
- Human health
- Ecosystem services, agriculture and materials, including for construction, transport, photovoltaic use and microplastics.

Council noted the update and looked forward to future updates on this programme.

11. Emerging issues from external bodies

11.1. WHO REMPAN collaborating centre – Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Correspondence was received from the CEO of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, in response to the letter sent by Council on 9 July 2024. Council noted and discussed the correspondence. The CEO of ARPANSA noted that they were aware of the items raised by the Centre and committed to providing an update to Council on this topic at a future meeting in 2025.

Task: The Chair to send a reply to the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre noting that the Council will seek advice from ARPANSA on matters raised in their letter, which Council will discuss further in 2025.

12. Outcomes from the OECD-NEA Sixth International Nuclear Emergency Exercise

Council received a presentation on the outcomes of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) Sixth International Nuclear Emergency Exercise (INEX-6) on the long-term recovery from radiological and nuclear emergencies. The question-driven tabletop exercise focuses on the long-term recovery stage following the termination of a nuclear emergency. Australia participated in all stages of the exercise, which was held in Hobart, Tasmania in March 2024, followed by a virtual session in April 2024. Australia modified the scenario to best fit into the Australian context. ARPANSA noted several lessons learned, including that Australia lacks certain capabilities and has a limited response/recovery capacity due to our small nuclear footprint, but has strong international and industry relations that could be leveraged in event of such an incident.

Council discussed the INEX-6 exercise, and their observations were noted for future lessons learned regarding the long-term recovery from radiological and nuclear emergencies for the Australian context.

13. Alfred Hospital Emergency Preparedness Exercise

Council received a verbal update from Mr Perry on a very recent Alfred Hospital Emergency Preparedness Exercise. ARPANSA and the Chair of Council also attended the exercise as observers. The exercise was designed to simulate the initial phase of the Alfred Hospital's response to an external incident, prior to senior/executive management arrival. There was a chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) overlay to the exercise, however participants were not aware of this knowledge until the exercise began. The exercise was highly valued and showed a robust clinical approach to a mass casualty event including radiological contamination. Lessons learned from the experience will inform future planning and training.

14. Other Business

The Council discussed status of actions related to other topics for consideration, including sustainability in radiation protection in Australia; theranostics; the re-processing of mining residue streams as a source of radionuclides for theranostics; and progress on the ARPANSA response to the Council's previous advice on emergency preparedness and response (EPR) and sealed sources of

radiation. The CEO noted that more substantial discussion on these topics will be scheduled during 2025.

Task: Working Group meeting to discuss the United National Sustainable Development Goals and their role in radiation protection within Australia.

Task: Presentation at a future meeting in 2025 regarding processing in mining.

Task: Presentation at a future meeting in 2025 regarding theranostics.

Task: ARPANSA to update Council on the progress on the response letters on EPR and sealed sources.

15. Housekeeping and Meeting Close

The Council reviewed the actions from the meeting. The next meeting is set for 26-27 March 2025 (Melbourne).