

Australian Radioactive Waste Agency

ARWA-ARPANSA LIAISON FORUM (LFAA)

Executive Summary of 19 October 2023

Terms of Reference

- The meeting was held in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the ARWA-ARPANSA Liaison Forum (LFAA TOR), dated 31 August 2022.

Outcomes of Previous LFAA

- The Executive Summary from the previous LFAA, dated 27 February 2023, was accepted by both parties, with copies to be made available on both the ARPANSA and ARWA websites.

Strategic Overview from ARWA CEO

- ARWA's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was pleased to advise recruitment of new staff to the ARWA team and introduced ARWA attendees.
- ARWA's CEO discussed the importance of mental health and wellbeing, particularly with the significant changes impacting ARWA over the last 12 months, noting he will work with his teams to support staff wellbeing.
- ARWA's CEO advised of the Government's continued commitment to ARWA and their roles and responsibilities, and ensuring ARWA is an enduring radioactive waste management agency committed to sustainable disposal pathways. This includes providing an ongoing waste management function and expert advice to whole-of-government; developing and implementing disposal pathways for low level (LLW) and intermediate level (ILW) radioactive waste; understanding the role of social licence, noting it is key to implementing disposal pathways; and continuing technical and safety case work.
- ARWA's CEO advised that, given the Government's decision regarding the Kimba site, ARWA are assessing the way forward, recognising the decision has implications for the Kimba community, Barnjarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation (BDAC) and other First Nations people, ANSTO and other stakeholders. This work also includes understanding the lessons learned from previous siting processes.

Strategic Overview from ARPANSA CEO

- ARPANSA's CEO discussed the recent International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission and commented that it had been a fairly **significant** undertaking for the agency. She further thanked ARWA for their contribution and advised the report will be made public in 2024.
- ARPANSA's CEO advised that recruitment and onboarding of new staff and backfilling arrangements has been a major focus and will continue to be for some time.
- ARPANSA's CEO discussed the uncertain operational environmental context and longer term funding arrangements with some work programs currently funded to June 2025.
- ARPANSA's CEO advised of the new Waste Decommissioning and Transport Section within Regulatory Services Branch, which is currently going through a recruitment process to finalise appointments. There are a range of large licence applications received or to be received, such as the SyMo licence to operate, HIFAR and Cyclotron decommissioning licence applications, and a range of new facilities for construction that will be transitioned to this section.
- ARPANSA's Regulatory Services Branch are working on the development of the new regulatory database that includes a portal for licence holders, with the expectation that it will improve compliance and reduce administrative burden.
- ARPANSA's CEO reflected on the IAEA General Conference, noting the value of ARWA's attendance as part of the delegation.

ARPANSA Regulatory Matters

- ARPANSA's CEO briefly discussed ARPANSA's interactions with the Department of Defence, specifically associated with the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program.
- ARPANSA's CEO advised that a small delegation was travelling to the United Kingdom (UK) to spend some time at relevant UK facilities and engage further with the UK Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR).
- ARPANSA provided an update on ARPANSA's regulatory guidance for the disposal of LLW and the requirement for retrievability, noting ARPANSA needs to give this additional consideration due to the dynamic operational context.
- ARPANSA provided an overview of the revised IAEA *Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material*, specifically around what to consider in the review of the safety assessment and safety case, among other considerations.
- ARPANSA advised that A1 and A2 values have been updated and are available on the ARPANSA website for comment.

ARWA Matters

- ARWA provided advice relating to the Kimba court judgement on 18 July 2023 and also the Minister's statement on 10 August 2023 that the judgement would not be appealed, nor would the Kimba or other 2 shortlisted sites be further pursued for a radioactive waste management facility.
- ARWA advised they were continuing land management activities and routine inspections of the Kimba site to ensure the site continues to be well maintained. They also advised that, with BDAC's engagement, they are planning remediation of the site, with plans to include protecting cultural heritage on the site during remediation activities.
- ARWA advised they have requested the withdrawal of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* referral and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has accepted this request.

- ARWA advised they will revise their technical work program to focus on site agnostic activities and discussed a range of technical support and other projects currently underway.
- ARWA advised attendees of the review of the *Australian Radioactive Waste Management Framework* and development of a national strategy on decommissioning, as required in the IRRS.
- ARWA provided a presentation and discussed ARWA's enduring functions, specifically around the inventory improvement plan, including where ARWA will reach out to waste holders to seek greater understanding of their waste holdings and radioactive waste management practices.
- ARWA spoke about their visits to Woomera, Fisherman's Bend as well as the waste holdings at ARPANSA and their intention to work with ANSTO on their waste management program.
- ARWA discussed the engagement forums undertaken in regards to social licence, where the focus was very much on Kimba post-judgement. Key to ARWA's engagement was the question around their transition strategy in Kimba and the lessons learned from the Kimba experience.

Mutual Areas of Interest

- ARWA's CEO provided an update on the joint study tour with the Australian Submarine Agency looking at borehole disposal. The tour visited the Yukka Mountain disposal program, the Waste Isolation Plant in the United States and Chalk River and the Nuclear Waste Management Organization in Canada.
- ARPANSA's CEO and staff advised of the range of international meetings and exercises coming up in the 2024 calendar year.
- ARWA provided a detailed presentation on ARWA's Workforce Strategy.
- ARPANSA's CEO provided an update on ARPANSA's graduate training program, with 3 current graduates having recently undertaken the Graduate Certificate Program in Adelaide.
- ARWA provided details about their cultural awareness training.

Next Meeting

- It is proposed that the next meeting is held in the second quarter of 2024 in Adelaide (ARWA to schedule).