INTEGRATED REGULATORY REVIEW SERVICE (IRRS) FOLLOW–UP MISSION TO THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)

Sydney, Australia

7 to 15 November 2011

DEPARTMENT OF NUCLEAR SAFETY AND SECURITY
REPORT
INTEGRATED REGULATORY REVIEW SERVICE (IRRS)
FOLLOW-UP REPORT TO
THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Sydney, Australia

Mission date: 7 to 15 November 2011
Regulatory body: Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)
Location: ARPANSA Headquarters, Sydney (Miranda), Australia
Regulated facilities and practices: Research reactors, industrial and research applications, waste facilities, decommissioning and remediation, transport, emergency preparedness.
Organized by: International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

IRRS REVIEW TEAM

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IAEA-2011
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Commonwealth Government of Australia, an international team of eleven experts in radiation and nuclear safety visited the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), from 25 June to 6 July 2007 to conduct a full scope Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission. The purpose of the mission was to undertake a peer review of ARPANSA’s regulatory framework and its effectiveness against IAEA Safety Standards and to exchange information and experience on safety regulation. ARPANSA is the regulatory body responsible for radiation protection and nuclear safety in relation to activities with radiation sources and radiation and nuclear facilities undertaken by the Australian Government (Commonwealth) entities and their contractors.

In June 2010, the Commonwealth Government of Australia requested a Follow-up IRRS mission to review the progress in implementing improvements resulting from recommendations and suggestions made in the IRRS 2007 mission and reviewing the areas of significant regulatory changes since then. The scope of the IRRS follow-up mission covered the review of implementation of the 2007 recommendations and suggestions, as well as the review of the IRRS module on patient protection. The follow-up mission also included policy issue discussions on emergency preparedness and response, radioactive waste management and patient protection in the context of national uniformity.

The review was conducted from 8 to 15 November 2011 and the review team comprised of five senior regulators from five Member States, three staff members from the IAEA and an IAEA administrative assistant. ARPANSA had submitted to the IAEA, in advance of the mission, an information package including a status report on actions to implement the 2007 recommendations and suggestions. The IRRS activities took place at the ARPANSA Headquarters in Sydney as well as in the Yallambie premises.

The team concluded that the recommendations and suggestions from the 2007 IRRS mission have been taken into account by ARPANSA. Significant progress has been made in several areas and many improvements were carried out especially in the last 12 months. However, there was no comprehensive and coordinated action plan to address the 2007 recommendations and suggestions that was made available to the IRRS follow-up review team, but it was recognised there were a number of planning processes in place which collectively addressed many of the recommendations and suggestions. These included the Regulatory and Policy Branch business plans and the quality management system plans.

During this follow-up mission the IRRS team determined that 7 of the recommendations and 26 of the suggestions made by the 2007 IRRS mission had been effectively addressed and therefore could be considered closed. ARPANSA should be commended for this accomplishment. For the remaining recommendations and suggestions made, ARPANSA has made progress but has not completed all the necessary actions and consequently these findings have been left open. The IRRS team also concluded that ARPANSA should continue its efforts to reach full implementation.

During the 2011 follow-up mission, the IRRS team made note of the following strengths:

- The response to the TEPCO Fukushima Dai-ichi accident;
- The high level of in-house technical expertise in radiation safety;
- A recognition of the need and willingness to reorganize ARPANSA;
- The timely development of the national sealed source register in good coordination with other relevant organizations;
- The creation of the Australian clinical dosimetry service and the national diagnostic reference level database.

The IRRS team also identifies additional areas to further strengthen ARPANSA’s regulatory infrastructure and to support the observed improvement activities.

- Making full use of the opportunity to revise the ARPANS Act in 2012;
- Completing implementation of the reorganization of ARPANSA;
• Influencing enhancement of the national framework for nuclear and radiation emergency preparedness;
• Establishing a coordinating function for ARPANSA’s EPR arrangements;
• Better utilizing the expertise within ARPANSA with respect to the regulation of patient protection;
• Initiating the revision of RPS-14 to be aligned with GSR Part 3 to enhance its use nationally as the cornerstone of patient protection;
• Increasing its leadership role in the implementation of Codes of Practice in patient protection.

The IRRS team identifies areas where the Government should take actions specifically to enhance the national regulatory infrastructure for nuclear safety and security.

• Revise the ARPANS Act to take full account of international principles, recommendations and IAEA safety standards and guides;
• Enhance the national framework for nuclear and radiation emergency preparedness by clearly identifying and assigning responsibilities to ARPANSA and other appropriate organizations.

ARPANSA staff put significant effort into the preparation for the mission. During the review the administrative and logistical support was excellent and the review team was extended full cooperation in technical discussions with ARPANSA staff. ARPANSA counterparts were enthusiastic and interested in obtaining further advice relating to the way they conduct their work, and their plans for further development.