



National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia

## MEETING OF MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVES ON NATA COUNCIL

27 May 2010

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### SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- Consistent application and interpretation of accreditation requirements

This continues to be a 'work in progress'. There are a number of projects underway including a major revision of the FADs which, in addition to ensuring their currency, is aimed at removing duplication with the relevant standard, aligning interpretations of criteria between the fields and programs and improving the expression of requirements to eliminate ambiguity. Another major project involves a comprehensive review of the delivery of accreditation services, the "Streamlined Accreditation" project.

- Technical Assessor Forums

The concept of technical assessor forums is still under review and a number of options are being considered. NATA recognises the need to have improved engagement with technical assessors but given the number of fields and programs, the geographical spread of technical assessors and that most of them have 'day jobs', it is a complex issue. Web-based forums could be one solution to this issue. It should be noted that technical assessors are welcome to attend the technical forums held in conjunction with members' meetings.

- Complaints

A concern was raised by a member that NATA did not deal with disputed assessment findings appropriately in that they were not dealt with as complaints. If a disputed assessment finding cannot be resolved with the assessment team (ie with the Lead Assessor and Technical Assessor(s)), it should be escalated to the Field/Program Manager. The Field/Program Manager is obligated to review the matter and ensure that independent advice is received. This may be from one or more members of the AAC or Technical Group or other technical advisory body. If, in the view of the authorised representative, the matter is unresolved, it should be escalated in writing to Tony Vandenberg, Quality Manager for further investigation. This process is described in the latest FADs. The need for clarification of technical matters and professional differences of opinion are an inevitable part of, and indeed a strength of, a peer review process.

- Assessment feedback mechanisms

A project to develop a client feedback strategy has now been completed. There will now be a progressive implementation of a number of feedback mechanisms including web-based feedback forms that can be used to provide feedback on accreditation issues such as service delivery matters, interpretation of accreditation requirements etc.

- Comparability of accreditation by MRA partners

The issue of NATA being more prescriptive in its requirements than other accreditation bodies, particularly in relation to measurement traceability, has been raised on a number of occasions. It was noted that this is a sensitive issue and NATA intends working with APLAC to investigate concerns.

- How quickly does NATA adapt to changes in technology

It was noted that requirements in the FAD should not be a barrier to the adoption of new technology. If new technology renders a requirement obsolete or not applicable, or means the requirement needs to be interpreted or applied differently, then this can be accommodated.

- Laboratories charging for an endorsed reports

It was confirmed that NATA does not have any role in accredited facilities' charges for their services. It was also confirmed that NATA expects the same level of compliance with accreditation requirements irrespective of whether or not an endorsed report is issued.

- Consultation process for FAD reviews

There was some discussion about the need for wider consultation on proposed changes to FADs. It was confirmed that technical feedback is sought when the FADs are updated. This is via AACs, Technical Groups and other technical advisory bodies. It was noted that most AAC and Technical Group members are drawn from accredited facilities so they are able to provide input from the laboratory/facility perspective. It was agreed that NATA would consider mechanisms to obtain member feedback on proposed revisions to FADs.

- New surveillance program for Medical Testing laboratories

At this stage, there are no changes to any laboratory's surveillance regime. NATA is still developing a new surveillance model that will apply to all laboratories.

- Blood refrigerators in hospitals

There was some discussion about the management and maintenance of blood refrigerators in hospitals (ie that are outside the control of pathology laboratories) that are used for the storage of blood for transfusion. It was recognised that this is a long-standing issue that needs resolution.

- Acceptability of manufacturers' calibration of equipment

This is one area of the newly issued FADs that NATA has tried to clarify. In the first instance, each facility needs to determine whether its equipment needs to be calibrated. It therefore needs to determine firstly whether the measurement needs to be traceable to SI units. If so, then the calibration needs to be traceable and needs to be performed by a NATA accredited laboratory (and an endorsed report issued) or performed by the facility itself in accordance with NATA's in-house calibration policy.

- Assessors and personal liability

NATA has professional indemnity insurance which covers assessors and members of the Board, Council and technical committees.