

Report on the 6th LS AAC meeting, July 11-12, 2023, at NATA's Melbourne Offices

The meeting was led by Mr David Sheehan, who chaired his first meeting, and NATA extended a warm welcome to the following newly appointed Committee members attending their inaugural meeting.

- Mr John Waters, from Onsite Technology
- Dr Julian Cox, from the University of New South Wales
- Dr Dominee Wright, from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in WA.
- Ms Joanne Wilson, from the Therapeutic Goods Administration
- Ms Jasmine Lacis-Lee, from Bureau Veritas AssureQuality
- Dr Paul Wright, from Tweed Shire Council
- Mr Nigel West, from ChemCentre

General Manager update

- There has been limited growth in accreditation numbers, with some losses due to facility amalgamations.
- The biobanking program is now operational and has accredited one facility.
- An APAC re-evaluation was conducted in March 2023, resulting in the inclusion of biobanking to NATA's signatory recognition.
- ISO/IEC 17020 is undergoing a review which commenced in April 2023. Two NATA staff members are participating in the review working group (WG).
- ISO 15189 underwent revision and was published in November 2022. NATA has a three-year transition period for accredited facilities, with assessments against ISO 15189 starting in August 2023.
- ISO 17043 was revised and published in May 2023. NATA has a three-year transition period for accredited facilities, and assessments against ISO 17043 will begin in February 2024.
- Multi-site accreditation was launched in January 2023.
- NATA has established a WG to assess the impact of AI on NATA's accreditation activities and to develop assessment procedures for AI used by accredited facilities.

IANZ update

- Taumata Arowai, the drinking water regulator in New Zealand, has issued several documents pertaining to drinking water compliance.
- The Ministry of Primary Industries has implemented a regulatory framework to manage long term risks to public health and trade associated with *Salmonella enteritidis*.

Member updates

- CODEX is in the process of developing criteria for allergens in food. There is a lack of ISO or Australian Standard methods for allergen testing.
- AOAC is finalising method validation requirements for gluten and allergen methods, primarily targeting manufacturers, rather than end users.
- The Allergens Testing Special Interest Group is working on a guidance document related to allergen testing.
- The use of ethylene oxide as a sterilising agent for medical devices has raised concerns regarding residue issues, possibly necessitating a review of sterilisation cycles.
- The National Plant Proficiency Testing program has undergone a review by DAFF.
- Discussions were held about reporting requirements under the Biosecurity Act for new plant pests and diseases.
- The field of wastewater-based epidemiology is expanding and may offer accreditation opportunities.
- Geographical variations have been observed in toxin-producing algae, and NATA accredits facilities for potentially toxic algae, although confirmation of toxicity is often lacking.
- Ongoing issues were reported regarding facilities not adhering to standard methods as written and/or undertaking sampling of a standard method and/or subcontracting testing to facilities that do not follow the standard method.
- NATA currently allows facilities to report asbestos fibres per field when the air volume cannot be confirmed. While this is not technically invalid, it poses a risk as it allows the calculation of fibres per mL without assurance of the volume, potentially leading to erroneous results for site operational purposes.
- The recruitment and onboarding process of new Technical Assessors (TAs) should be reviewed to ensure that new TAs have the opportunity to observe assessments if they wish to do so.

Consideration needs to be given to how TAs can demonstrate ongoing technical competence, even after retirement.