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Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation

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New Reactor Licence Application Submitted

Today ANSTO* submitted its replacement research reactor (RRR) operating licence application to its regulator, the Australian Radiation Protection and Safety Agency (ARPANSA). An operating licence is required before fuel can be loaded in the RRR.

ANSTO Executive Director, Dr Ian Smith, said he expected ARPANSA would take some time to consider the application. Whilst he was anticipating a positive outcome, he acknowledged that ARPANSA's CEO would have to take a range of factors, including the results of international peer reviews and public submissions, into account.

"The licence application is another major milestone in the construction of the RRR," said Dr Smith. "Not only will the RRR allow us to produce four times more life-saving radiopharmaceuticals than at present, but it will also allow us to produce a greater variety of them.

"The demand for radiopharmaceuticals, which has been growing at a steady rate over the last decade, is expected to increase further over the next few years," Dr Smith continued. "The RRR will help us meet this demand, and also allow us to push the boundaries of medical research we are undertaking into diseases such as melanoma and Alzheimer's.

"In addition, the increased quality of neutron beams the RRR will provide means Australia will be able to conduct a wider range of fundamental research and in turn attract more scientists from around the world to use its facilities, increasing Australia's position in international research.

"The RRR is designed to be a neutron factory and this will raise the performance of Australian neutron science to the highest international standards. This will also enable world class research to continue to be conducted and developed in areas of biology, food science and materials science and engineering where neutron beams are an essential tool."

Eight neutron beam instruments are planned for the RRR. The facility will have the capacity for further expansion, including potential for a second neutron guide hall.

"ANSTO is a world leader in nuclear safety as well as nuclear science," said Dr Smith. "HIFAR has been operated safely for over 45 years. The pool design of the RRR is inherently safe and this will help us keep and strengthen this record."

Dr Smith concluded by stating that the licence could not be issued until the performance of systems was demonstrated through special tests called cold commissioning, which are due to take place in the second half of 2005.

For more information and to arrange an interview please contact:

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*ANSTO is Australia's national nuclear research and development organisation, and the centre of its nuclear expertise.