Media Release

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Nuclear benefits in 2009 Federal Budget

The 2009 Federal Budget has recognised the importance of nuclear science and technology as ANSTO* today welcomed funding of $62 million for new neutron research instruments in its OPAL reactor facility in Sydney's south, and for new funding to help establish a Centre for Accelerator Science.

ANSTO's Chief Executive Dr Adi Paterson said the funding would significantly enhance Australia's research capabilities in a variety of areas, from biology to climate change. He also said it would help Australia's largest single research expenditure – ANSTO's OPAL reactor – to reach its potential of being one of the three leading research reactors in the world.

"The Centre for Accelerator Science funding ($25 million) will enable an upgrade of current ANSTO accelerators at a time when ANSTO is looking to broaden its support for accelerator science," Dr Paterson said.

"This funding will support ANSTO's aim of working in partnership with other research organisations in a national network of accelerators to maximise the benefits this important infrastructure can offer.

"I am very pleased the Federal Government has recognised the benefits that science provides in this budget. Accelerators are key tools for use in nuclear safeguards and forensics, medical physics, materials science and radiation physics so ensuring Australia has top facilities for its scientists, which is very important."

The Australian National University added their support when Prof Aidan Byrne, Dean of Science and Director of the College of Physical Sciences ANU said: "This funding will greatly assist in facilitating Australian research institutions working more closely together. The ANU is enthusiastic at ANSTO's pursuit of stronger national science partnerships."

Dr Paterson added: "The neutron research funding will allow ANSTO to provide facilities for increased research into climate change and other environmental sciences; nano-scale objects such as DNA and proteins; nuclear medicine; and services surrounding nuclear non-proliferation.

"We are currently experiencing a great and increasing demand on some of the nine neutron beam instruments we already have and are building at ANSTO, so the funding for extra instruments ($37 million) will help address this issue.

"The additional instruments will also allow Australian scientists to undertake research into areas such as material behaviour and biological studies, which are at the leading edge of current international science," Dr Paterson concluded.

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* Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation – Australia's centre for nuclear science and research