



Media release

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Australia prepared in global nuclear medicine crisis

Australia's centre of nuclear expertise ANSTO¹ will make every effort to cater for Australian patients needs and to assist in the developing global nuclear medicine supply crisis. The crisis is being caused by the forced shutdown of the Canadian reactor at Chalk River in Ontario. That reactor normally produces one third of the world's nuclear medicines.

The reactor will be shut down for at least three months, according to the most recent reports from its operator, Atomic Energy Canada Limited. The shutdown means there is now an extended world-wide shortage of reactor-produced medical isotopes used for imaging and treating diseases like cancer.

Assurance of domestic supply in Australia is covered by committed and continuing imports from South Africa. ANSTO supplies 95 per cent of medical isotopes used by Australian patients. Those patients will not be affected by the global supply crisis.

ANSTO is committed to make every endeavour to bring fully on-line a nuclear medicine manufacturing plant associated with the new OPAL nuclear reactor. This new plant, which produces Molybdenum-99, will undergo plant efficiency improvements over the coming months upon receiving nuclear safety and health licensing approvals.

ANSTO is aiming to increase long-term production and ultimately export medical isotopes. In the event that this crisis is lengthy ANSTO may be able to assist in alleviating the impact of a global supply shortage. .

The 50 year old Canadian reactor was shut down on May 15 as a result of corrosion on the outside wall of the reactor vessel which resulted in a heavy water leak.

For more information please contact ANSTO Media and Community Relations Manager, Sharon Kelly (02) 9717 9575 or 0400 394 085

¹ The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation