



Media Release

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Landmark \$10 million nuclear medicine deal a life-saver

The Federal Government today announced a landmark, \$10 million deal between ANSTO¹ and global medical giant, Siemens Medical Solutions, to build a new nuclear medicine production facility, consisting of two state-of-the-art cyclotrons, that promises to substantially increase the availability of the latest in disease diagnosis and treatment to Australians.

Under this ground-breaking deal, revolutionary life-saving PET² facilities could potentially increase due to nuclear medicine supply costs decreasing. This is because currently hospitals need to have their own cyclotron to supply a PET facility with the necessary radiopharmaceuticals, adding to expenses. The new facility means on-site cyclotrons will no longer be necessary and products will be approved by the TGA³.

The deal also gives ANSTO access to Siemens' exclusive international PET radiopharmaceuticals network (PETNET) which consists of 46 PETNET centres that enable hospitals to diagnose and treat patients and supporting institutions to undertake research into next generation radiopharmaceuticals.

PET is a state-of-the-art nuclear medicine diagnostic technique which has produced significant advances in the diagnosis of cancer and other major medical conditions as it allows doctors to see disease at its earliest stage and precisely monitor treatment.

"The contract with Siemens will allow ANSTO to build twin cyclotrons at its site in Sydney's south and produce the short-lived radiopharmaceutical FDG (fluorodeoxyglucose) used in PET scanning," said Dr Ian Smith, ANSTO's Executive Director.

"PET is the fastest growing medical diagnostic imaging technique in the world and was recently recognised in Federal Government research as the best option for diagnosis and treatment in Australia. Its use has grown globally by 200 per cent in the last two years but many Australian patients are currently missing out.

"The shortage of facilities is due to cost, highlighted in the current debate between Federal and State governments regarding the Medicare rebate for PET procedures which in turn affect State funding to build new PET facilities.

"Last year thousands of patients in NSW alone could not access PET treatment and having this new production facility will help provide the necessary product to allow expansion of these services not only in NSW but other states within transport distance.

"FDG has a half-life of 110 minutes meaning that it loses half of its activity every 110 minutes. This means this radiopharmaceutical cannot be imported.

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¹ ANSTO is the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, the country's national nuclear research and development organisation and the centre of Australian nuclear expertise. It is based at Lucas Heights in Sydney's South.

² Positron Emission Tomography. This is a nuclear medicine imaging machine where a patient is injected with a radioisotope which is detected by the special camera to see where disease is forming or how a drug is working in the body.

³ Therapeutic Goods Administration. Currently hospital produced radiopharmaceuticals are not approved by the TGA.

“PET facilities use hospital-based cyclotrons or an outside supplier to produce FDG for a restricted number of patients. The new facility will make FDG available to the wider community.

“Having two cyclotrons at ANSTO will allow it to produce other short-lived isotopes for research while ensuring a consistent supply of FDG to clinical patients,” said Dr Smith.

Siemens will also contribute to a joint radiopharmaceutical research program with ANSTO.

“Australians will benefit from this unique innovative partnership,” said Albert Goller, Chairman and Managing Director of Siemens Australia and New Zealand.

“These critical radiopharmaceuticals will be more readily available and in turn more research can be conducted. That research could lead to better ways of diagnosing and treating disease.

“Siemens is delighted to help develop this important radiopharmaceutical production and research area for Australia,” concluded Mr Goller.

PET facilities currently exist in the following hospitals: NSW: Royal Prince Alfred Hospital*, Liverpool Hospital, Newcastle Hospital, St Vincent’s Hospital and Westmead Hospital. VIC: Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute*, Austin Health and Medical Imaging Australia*, Monash Medical Centre. QLD: Royal Brisbane Hospital*, Wesley Hospital*. WA: Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital*. South Australia: Royal Adelaide Hospital. Those with an asterisk have hospital-based cyclotrons.

A full media briefing with key people from ANSTO and Siemens will be held today at 10.30am at The NSW Chamber of Commerce, Level 12, 83 Clarence Street, Sydney.

For more information and to arrange an interview please contact:

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