Media Release

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Science Enrolments on the Rise

Research into a joint initiative of Australia’s science agencies may have found a solution to the nation’s decline in high school science enrolments.

An initiative of Australia’s nuclear science organisation (ANSTO) in 2004 led to an increase in science enrolments according to a survey of participating schools.

ANSTO’s Careers in Science initiative which was backed also by the CSIRO, followed a Federal Government National Schools Strategy which identified the need for greater promotion of careers in science.

The plan aims to encourage more school students to pursue careers in science through the publication of educational resources, site tours and a special website - http://www.careersinscience.gov.au

In schools where ‘Careers in Science’ materials had been utilised, 35 per cent of respondents indicated there had been increased enrolments in science subjects compared to before the time the resources were being used.

Furthermore the research, conducted by ANSTO, showed that out of over 350 science teachers and careers advisors interviewed across NSW, 55 per cent said students enrolling in senior science subjects showed greater interest after using Careers in Science resources.

In addition 62 per cent of teachers said that students’ perceptions towards nuclear science had been enhanced as a result of ANSTO’s education resources.

The number of students enrolling in physical sciences in upper high schools had been dropping both nationally and internationally for almost 15 years, and it was widely recognised that this would lead to a decreased number of quality scientists.

Mr Andrew Humpherson, General Manager Public Affairs said the decline was dangerous both socially and economically for Australia.

“Without high calibre scientists, it’s expected that innovations and business developments would flag, making it harder for Australia to compete internationally,” he said.

“More worrying is that a lack of scientists can also lead to a decreased understanding of technological issues in society. It’s important for people to understand how science impacts their lives and how the world works.

“Science is recognised internationally as the foundation for a strong economic future and we need to do all we can to encourage science study and interest amongst children of all ages.

“As a government science agency, we want to be able to contribute something back to society through increasing the number of people with scientific education,” concluded Mr Humpherson.

For more information and to arrange an interview please contact: Sharon Kelly, Media Adviser, (02) 9717 9575 or 0400 394 085 or sharon.kelly@ansto.gov.au

*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 – over 70 per cent of all radioisotopes used in Australian nuclear medicine are made in ANSTO’s reactor

**Australian Institute of Marine Science and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation