Clarification on ABC 7.30 Report’s Uranium Enrichment Story

Last night, the ABC’s 7.30 Report story on uranium enrichment was wrong to state that work undertaken by ANSTO’s\(^1\) predecessor, the AAEC\(^2\), in the 1980’s was conducted in secret and without the knowledge of the Government of the time.

Relevant public records, including the annual reports of the AAEC and the Australian Safeguards Office (now ASNO\(^3\)), describe the systems studies on safeguards approaches into enrichment using centrifuges at the Lucas Heights site that was undertaken up until 1986.

This research program did not commence in 1983, as claimed by the 7:30 Report, in order to avoid a directive by the newly-elected Government to close down enrichment research. It had been underway since 1980 and was in co-operation with the IAEA.

Research into Uranium enrichment using centrifuges did discontinue in 1983.

Statements by former staff of the AAEC do not reflect the current views of ANSTO. ANSTO’s submission to the UMPNER process last year expressed strong doubts as to the commercial feasibility of a proposal to set up an enrichment facility in Australia.

It should be noted that ANSTO undertakes no uranium enrichment or weapons-related research.

ANSTO maintains high security, consistent with government and public expectations. The ANSTO site houses reactor facilities and radioactive material which must be protected under international and national regulations. ANSTO also undertakes a wide variety of applied nuclear science research which is commercially valuable.

For more information about ANSTO’s work go to www.ansto.gov.au or call (02) 9717 3111.

More information and to arrange interviews please call Sharon Kelly, Media Adviser on (02) 9717 9575 or 0400 395 085

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

\(^2\) Australian Atomic Energy Commission

\(^3\) Australian Safeguards and Non-proliferation Office