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Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research
Leader of the Government in the Senate

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia leads the way with nuclear medicine initiative

Australia will be at the forefront of the global fight against cancer and heart disease after the Gillard Government announced a world first nuclear medical research initiative.

Minister for Science and Research, Senator Chris Evans, today announced a \$168 million investment in nuclear medicine and treatment, which will generate 250 jobs and deliver a \$1 billion return to Australia.

The plan will be delivered by scientists at the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) at Lucas Heights using the existing low-enriched uranium reactor, the Open Pool Australian Lightwater (OPAL) nuclear reactor. It comprises:

- Construction of a nuclear medicine manufacturing plant, securing Australia's ability to produce Molybdenum-99 (Mo-99) which is used for diagnosis of heart disease, cancers, and kidney and gastrointestinal tract disorders.
- Construction of a Synroc plant which will deliver a safe and economical way of managing by-products from nuclear medicine manufacture.

"Today is an important day for the 550,000 people who require a nuclear medicine procedure in Australia each year, as well as the 45 million people across the globe who will be able to access Australian-produced nuclear medicine," Senator Evans said.

"One in two Australians will receive a nuclear medicine procedure in their lifetime and around 80 per cent of those will require the use of Mo-99.

"This highlights Australia's global and regional leadership on nuclear medical science.

"The initiative will help meet half the world's needs for Mo-99.

"Australians should be proud of the research which underpins this announcement and the difference it will make to people here at home and around the world."

The new Synroc waste treatment plant will reduce the volume of nuclear bi-products by 99 per cent compared to other methods.

"The new Synroc plant and export of Synroc intellectual property will showcase Australian innovation and manufacturing capability," Senator Evans said.

"This project is an example of the excellent work being undertaken by our science community and by ANSTO."

The project will start full production in 2016.