



Australian Government



Nuclear-based science benefiting all Australians

14 July 2010

Mr John Hawkins  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Economics Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Mr Hawkins

I refer to the appearance by ANSTO before the Committee for consideration of Estimates on 31 May. During ANSTO's appearance, there was some discussion regarding the decommissioning of the HIFAR research reactor (see page E 9 of the Hansard). On reviewing the Hansard, I thought it might be useful if I were to provide some clarification on these matters to the Committee.

At the time of HIFAR's closure in January 2007, ANSTO stated that its intention was to commence decommissioning the reactor around ten years after closure – that is, around 2017. That statement was reaffirmed in evidence given to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee at that time. That broad timeframe remains ANSTO's target. However, as I said at the 31 May hearing, a detailed timetable for the decommissioning process has not yet been developed.

Given that the decommissioning of HIFAR is not due to commence for some years yet, no money has yet been allocated for that purpose. However, the \$9.7 million provided for decommissioning activities on the ANSTO site in 2010-11 does include \$2.6 million for costs associated with the "safe enclosure" (a process that necessarily precedes decommissioning and the costs of which are treated in Australia on the same basis as decommissioning costs) of the HIFAR reactor. Those costs include costs for the demolition of ancillary structures and for the refurbishment of ventilation, monitoring and other systems to ensure that the reactor remains in a safe state for the period up until 2017.

I hope that this information is of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

**DR ADI PATERSON**  
Chief Executive Officer