

Professor Simon Ringer,
Facilitator, NCRIS Characterisation Capability,
University of Sydney

7 August 2006

Dear Professor Ringer,

Planning Update NCRIS Capability 5.3 Characterisation Neutron Scattering - ANBUG Response

ANBUG, the Australian Neutron Beam Users Group (<http://www.anbug.org/>), would like to comment on the Proposed Infrastructure for Neutron Scattering as summarised in Table 7, Section 2.4 of the Planning Update NCRIS Capability 5.3 Characterisation.

While we realise that NCRIS is unlikely to be in a position to fund fully the Capital Expenditure outlined in Scenario 1: High End, an important advantage of the summary in Table 7 is that it draws out well several of the key items required by the Australian Neutron Scattering Community in the relatively near future (5-10 years). Central to those future developments are the national facility for both biodeuteration and chemical deuteration and a new split cold guide at OPAL as featured in Scenario 2 of Table 7. In brief and as documented elsewhere in the Planning Update [6, 10, 11], the strengths of these two items of Capital Expenditure (deuteration facility and new split cold guide) are the diversity of quality science which can be undertaken with these resources and the significant numbers of scientists who will benefit from these developments. ANBUG fully and strongly supports the allocation of funds for the Capital Expenditure items, deuteration facility and new split cold guide, as summarised in Table 7.

In the same vein ANBUG acknowledges the recognition in the Planning Update of the need for operational staff for the deuteration facility and fully supports the proposed allocation of funds.

As outlined in our letter to you of 21 June 2006, as representatives of the Nation's Neutron Beam Users Group, we are especially concerned to ensure proper funding is available for the community to exploit - to the fullest extent and to the maximum national benefit - the set of high quality instruments nearing completion at OPAL. We are therefore very pleased indeed to see the inclusion of the Characterisation Access Scheme (Scenario 1) and the Travel and Access Programme (Scenario 2) in the Planning Update.

However, as noted in Section 1.2 it is estimated that, when completed, the current set of 9 OPAL instruments will meet ~80 % of the basic needs of the existing Australian user community. A major qualification and concern which we therefore have regarding either of the proposed Access Schemes is the absence of funds to allow Australian Scientists access to the set of instruments available by peer-reviewed application to World-class neutron facilities overseas. We therefore argue strongly that funds for international access should also be included in the Access item presented in Table 7.

Indeed we are aware of the detailed data which The Australian Institute of Nuclear Science and Engineering (AINSE) plan to submit to you in their response to the Planning Update NCRIS Capability 5.3 Characterisation. The data presented by AINSE demonstrate clearly the needs for both enhanced funding levels for national access and inclusion of funding for international access. We therefore would like to express our strong endorsement of the recommendation included in AINSE's response to you.

In conclusion, while lauding the Expenditure Items listed for Neutron Scattering under Scenario 1 of Table 7, in view of the financial limitations imposed on NCRIS, ANBUG endorses the items listed under Scenario 2. Our main qualification surrounds the limited funds proposed for national and international access to neutron facilities; in this light we strongly support the forthcoming response from AINSE which present quantitative details in support of enhanced funding levels for access to national and international neutron facilities.

Yours sincerely,

Stewart Campbell (President)
Craig Buckley (Vice-President)
Ian Gentle (Past President)
Brendan Kennedy (Treasurer)
Jamie Schulz (Secretary)
Trevor Finlayson
Wim Klooster
Chris Ling