



DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE

The Secretary

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AUSTRALIA

24 June 1986

Dr A W Hewat
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Dear Dr Hewat

Thank you for your letters of 29 April and 9 June regarding the future of Australian activities in neutron scattering. Given the job offer from Lucas Heights, this issue now vitally affects your future!

As you are aware, ASTEC is only an advisory body to the Prime Minister and thus implementation of its recommendations (even if approved by Cabinet) depends on the Departments which supply the resources. In the current climate of restraint, new resources are not available and existing funds need to be diverted if new projects are to be undertaken.

In the case of Lucas Heights, the relevant Department is Resources and Energy and, to the best of my knowledge, it is committed to maintaining HIFAR for the foreseeable future.) In the longer term, consideration will have to be given to possible re-siting of the establishment due to pressure from urban development and from environmental groups. This may lead to a fundamental reappraisal of Australia's position.

The negotiations with overseas facilities are in a preliminary stage and, from our viewpoint (since DoS has responsibility for international S&T activities), are seen as multipliers for a small outlay to ensure that Australian researchers gain access to facilities that we cannot afford here! There have been general discussions with the Indonesians about access to their reactor when it is commissioned and Lucas Heights are involved in some aid programs involving reactor safety and isotope production.

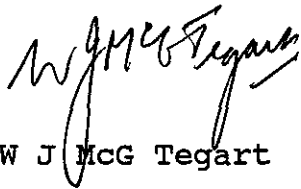
In the case of Europe, we have been offered access (at a cost!) to ISIS as part of the general Anglo-Australian S&T co-operation. Another possibility is an associate ~~share~~ share of ILL. The main problem in our considerations is money, as both options are likely to cost around \$2-3 million per

annum for a period of at least 5-10 years (with funding to support people as well as travel of several \$100k per annum). Whether we can work out a better deal involving supply of instrumentation has yet to be explored.

Unfortunately, my ability to divert funding is currently limited (for example, my total budget for international activities is less than \$1 million which includes support of overseas S&T Counsellors!) and the only possibility for a large amount is from the Australian Research Grants Scheme which is already underfunded. There would be a great outcry from the other scientists in the community!

While the above picture is somewhat gloomy, I believe it is reasonably realistic and it would be wrong of me to be too optimistic about the future of nuclear science in Australia. However, I can only hope that a more realistic attitude by Australian scientists to applications-oriented projects, eg, an emphasis on the use of neutron scattering in materials development, will help to change the general political climate in the longer term. If you feel that you can contribute to this end, without compromising your scientific integrity, then I would urge you to think seriously about the Lucas Heights offer.

Yours sincerely



W J McG Tegart