

7 October 2003



National  
StemCell  
Centre

## STEM CELL CONFERENCE ATTRACTS GLOBAL EXPERTS

Many of the world's leading experts in stem cell science and regenerative medicine will attend this week's inaugural scientific conference being held in Melbourne by Australia's National Stem Cell Centre (NSCC).

The prestigious conference, with the theme 'Stem Cells and Tissue Repair', has attracted 20 international speakers including scientists from Canada, China, France, Israel, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Singapore, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The keynote speaker will be Professor Ron McKay from the US National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, whose work has focused on treatments for neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases as well as other areas including diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

NSCC Chief Executive Officer, Dr Hugh Niall said the high calibre of global and local experts presenting at the conference (9-12 October) was a testament to the international standing of the recently established Centre and also the high regard in which NSCC founder and Executive Vice-Chairman Professor Alan Trounson is held.

"As Australia's Biotechnology Centre of Excellence, the NSCC was formed out of the 'Backing Australia's Ability' initiative of the Commonwealth Government. We are proud to be hosting some of the world's best scientists and leaders in stem cell biotechnologies, including contributors in biosciences, bioethics and commercial medicine," Dr Niall said.

"The conference, which will be an annual event, will enable us to share knowledge and expertise with many of those at the forefront of research that promises to enhance the lives of people with previously incurable diseases and conditions.

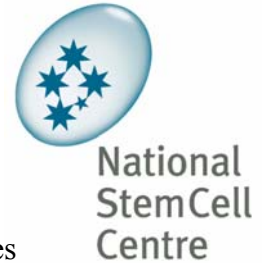
"Stem cell research is gathering pace throughout the world and advances are happening almost on a daily basis so it is important that the international scientific community is given this type of opportunity to swap notes and compare progress.

"Significantly, the conference also strengthens Australia's established position as a world leader in this exciting field of research and commercial development."

Dr McKay will give the Menzies Foundation Lecture on 'The Importance of Stem Cells in Science and Medicine' on Wednesday 8 October at 7pm at the ANZ Pavillion, Level 8, Victorian Arts Centre, St Kilda Road. The free public lecture is generously supported by the Menzies Foundation and the Victorian Government.

The conference itself will be held from Thursday 9 October at the Grand Hyatt, with the official opening followed by the Plenary Lecture to be given by Professor Alan Trounson, who is also the NSCC's Global Science Strategic Adviser.

.../2



## **NSCC Background**

The National Stem Cell Centre is a major collaborative effort, uniting a diverse collection of Australia's leading researchers and scientists working in laboratories around the country, with key nodes in four Australian states – Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia.

It was formed out of the 'Backing Australia's Ability' initiative of the Commonwealth Government to establish a Biotechnology Centre of Excellence, and was awarded \$43.55 million in Commonwealth funding through the Australian Research Council and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources to:

1. Deliver therapeutic treatments from stem cell and tissue repair biotechnology for economic and social benefits;
2. Increase Australia's biotechnology reputation and global competitive advantage; and
3. To enhance public awareness of stem cell and tissue repair research.

A further Commonwealth grant of \$5.5 million was awarded to the NSCC to establish a Major National Research Facility (MNRF) and an \$11.375 million supporting grant came from the Victorian Government under its Science, Technology and Innovation program.

A rigorous scientific review process is underway to ensure that NSCC funding is allocated to projects that will accelerate the delivery of stem cell technologies and therapeutic products that improve the lives of people with a range of debilitating diseases and disorders.

The breadth of potential therapeutic applications that could be pursued by the NSCC is so great that it would be unrealistic and impractical for the Centre to efficiently address all potential avenues of research.

The due diligence process includes consultation with independent experts and international reviewers. Projects are being selected based on scientific merit, achievability and synergy with the Centre's objectives.

These objectives are to build on Australia's world-leading position in specific areas of stem cell research and then translate this research into successfully treating patients via the commercialisation of therapeutic applications.

## **Media Inquiries**

**For Conference: Dr Shae Cox, 0411 142 406; Dr Maree Overall, 0414 576 089  
On-site conference office: (03) 9653 4818**

**General Enquiries for National Stem Cell Centre: James Tonkin, 0413 432 775**