



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Premier of Victoria

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VICTORIA SECURES TOP STEM CELL SCIENTIST

Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks, today announced that a world leader in tissue regeneration – Dr Stephen Livesey – would be based at the National Stem Cell Centre (NSCC) in Melbourne.

Speaking on the eve of Bio2003 in Washington DC, Mr Bracks said Dr Livesey's work had major benefits for severe burns victims.

“This is great news for the Centre and great news for stem cell research globally,” Mr Bracks said.

“Stem cell research holds great promise for cures for diseases such as Parkinson's, cancer, diabetes and stroke, and the Victorian Government is a strong supporter of this research sector.”

Dr Livesey completed his PhD at Melbourne University before moving to Houston in 1996 to co-found LifeCell, now a leader in regenerative medicine.

Mr Bracks said Dr Livesey would return to Melbourne after LifeCell Corporation, a US\$100 million company, entered into a world-first license and collaboration agreement with the NSCC.

The State Government has contributed \$11.4 million to ensure the NSCC was located in Victoria.

Dr Livesey will become the Chief Scientific Officer (CSO) of the Centre, while retaining an affiliation with LifeCell.

The NSCC is examining the potential of four types of stem cell research – embryonic and adult stem cells, manipulation of the immune system to prevent rejection, and tissue regeneration.

“No other organisation has brought together these critical technologies,” Dr Livesey said.

He said that the LifeCell technology promised to become an integral part of the fourth arm of the Centre's research – tissue regeneration.

“LifeCell is a leader in the emerging field of regenerative medicine through the development and commercialisation of biological products to repair or replace the body's damaged tissue,” Dr Livesey said.

“The collaborative agreement grants the NSCC the rights to use LifeCell's tissue matrix technology in its internal research.

“It is a unique relationship that will enable the technology to be fast-tracked into the clinic,” Dr Livesey said.

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Since starting LifeCell in 1986 in Houston, Dr Livesey has insisted that the company remain focused on clinical outcomes for its research – even when it was under commercial pressure to focus on the potentially more lucrative cosmetic applications of tissue matrices.

Dr Livesey can be contacted via 0419 534 101.

An Overview of Victoria, Australia's Biotech Industry

- Victoria is the number one biotech location in Asia Pacific (Ernst & Young 2002 Global Biotechnology Report ranks Australia as #6 in global biotech activity)
- Bristol-Myers Squibb established its first R&D hub outside of US at Melbourne HQ.
- Melbourne hosts majority of pre-seed funds including \$11m Biocomm investment fund
- Victoria's biotech industry grows in market downturn (>18% growth in VC investment in Victorian biotech companies - 2001/2002)