

# MEDIA RELEASE

## **Australian scientists pleased with therapeutic cloning vote**

**Thursday 7 December 2006, Melbourne:** Australian stem cell scientists were very pleased to learn of the decision in the House of Representatives last night to allow somatic cell nuclear transfer, also known as therapeutic cloning.

Professor Stephen Livesey, Chief Executive Officer at the Australian Stem Cell Centre based in Melbourne, expressed his thanks to all members of parliament for their diligent and considered responses to the Private Members' Bill put forward by Senator Kay Patterson and introduced to the lower house by Dr Mal Washer.

"This has been a very complex debate and the ASCC is very appreciative of the considerable effort that all members of the House of Representatives and the Senate have committed to personally understanding the science and ethical questions this field of research raises."

"I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous support that the stem cell scientific community around Australia has received from Senator Kay Patterson and Dr Mal Washer, as well as Senators Natasha Stott-Despoja and Ruth Webber, in raising the amended legislation and keeping stem cell research on the parliamentary agenda."

"On behalf of the Australian stem cell science community I would also like to extend our thanks to the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, for providing the opportunity for a conscience vote on this issue."

"I believe it was very important that members of parliament were given an opportunity to learn about the nature of stem cell science, to debate the issues and to offer their personal perspectives on how this science might impact upon Australians."

"I hope the end of the parliamentary debate will not mark the end of the public debate about stem cell research. Justice John Lockhart, the late Chairman of the Lockhart Committee appointed to provide advice to the Government on the legislation and state of research, encouraged stem cell scientists to speak publicly about their work. When he visited the Australian Stem Cell Centre late last year, during the public hearings, he specifically articulated the importance of public education and the important role scientists should play in encouraging ongoing discussion."

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### **Background to the Australian Stem Cell Centre**

The Australian Stem Cell Centre is Australia's Biotechnology Centre of Excellence. The Centre has partnered with nine leading Australian universities and research institutions and brings together a critical mass of outstanding Australian stem cell research that is internationally competitive and recognised.

The Centre's principal objective is to integrate a national multi-institutional research and discovery program to develop treatments for serious disease through the application of stem cells and related technologies.

The Australian Stem Cell Centre is funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments.