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Media Release

AUSTRALIAN STEM CELL CENTRE SIGNS INTERNATIONAL STEM CELL CHARTER TO CONTINUE ADVANCING RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH

20 October 2009, Melbourne Australia

The Australian Stem Cell Centre pledges support for the principles of the Charter and the importance of continuing stem cell research to generate innovative solutions to human health challenges.

The Stem Cell Charter is a collective call to action in support of stem cell research. It is a web-based, interactive document that affirms the importance of stem cell science and articulates five guidance principles for research workers, institutions and government bodies active in the stem cell area:

- **Responsibility** to maintain the highest level of scientific quality, safety and ethical conduct
- **Protection** of citizens from harm and the safeguarding of the public trust and values
- **Intellectual Freedom** to exchange ideas in the spirit of international collaboration
- **Transparency** through the disclosure of results and possible conflicts of interest
- **Integrity** in the promotion and advancement of stem cell research and therapy for the betterment of the welfare of all human beings

By signing the Charter, the ASCC has formally pledged adherence to the values it upholds throughout the Centre's supported research programs – the highest level of scientific rigour, integrity and openness.

Professor Graham Macdonald, Chairman of the ASCC said, "The Australian Stem Cell Centre is proud to sign this Charter and uphold its principles, which are fundamental to the continuation of international stem cell research". He went on to add that "progressing Australian stem cell research requires not only funding but international unity of purpose, cooperation and collaboration"

The Charter is an initiative of the Canadian Stem Cell Foundation, a charitable organisation that champions stem cell science. It is grounded in strong academic principles, and was written by world-renowned bioethicist Bartha Knoppers of McGill University, in collaboration with a working group of stem cell scientists, patients, ethicists and laypeople. The Charter has received over 1500 signatories since its inception on 22 September 2009.

Information about the Charter and a short movie can be found online at www.stemcellcharter.org. The Charter can be signed by all individuals and organisations with an interest in supporting the field.

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For further information or to arrange an interview, contact:

Rebecca Skinner
Senior Manager – Communications and Networking
Australian Stem Cell Centre
Phone + 613 92711180 Mobile +61 (0)400684993
Email rebecca.skinner@stemcellcentre.edu.au
www.stemcellcentre.edu.au

About the ASCC

The Australian Stem Cell Centre was founded to capitalise on Australia's significant strengths in the field of stem cell research. The ASCC was selected in 2002, in a competitive bid process, as Australia's Biotechnology Centre of Excellence, an initiative of the Australian Government. The Centre provides a unique national resource for stem cell researchers to deliver outcomes that benefit the wider Australian biotechnology industry and will ultimately contribute innovative solutions to human health challenges.

The Centre was established with the financial and in-kind support of a number of institutions of which the current voting Members, who retain ultimate oversight of the Centre, are: Monash University, University of Queensland, Howard Florey Institute and University of Adelaide. The additional Stakeholder institutes are: University of Melbourne, Baker IDI, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute and Mater Medical Research Institute.

The ASCC is governed by a Board of Directors with independent scientific oversight and support from an eminent Scientific Advisory Board.

Total funding of \$100 million has been awarded to the ASCC by the Australian Government and is administered by the Australian Research Council and the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. The funding is provided in instalments from 2002 to 2011. To complement Australian Government funding, the State Government of Victoria's Science Technology and Innovation program awarded the Australian Stem Cell Centre a further \$11 million to support key infrastructure in Victoria.

Together the ASCC and partnering organisations support a critical mass of Australian stem cell research that is internationally competitive. The ASCC currently funds research at leading institutes and universities in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales with the major hubs of activity centred in Victoria and Queensland.