

Media Coverage

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AusBiotech 2010 looks forward to gene-based innovation

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Special interests are strongly arguing that gene patents are stifling access to tests for serious health issues. However, the outright banning of gene patents will undoubtedly reduce, and in some cases eliminate, investment in related research, and ultimately is more likely to profoundly diminish public access to future gene-based developments in healthcare. AusBiotech is acknowledging the complexity of the debate and is concerned that misinformation and fear are among the drivers for calls for amendments to Australia's patent law to ban the patenting of a wide range of genetic and related materials.

During a session titled 'Busting the myths about gene patenting,' at AusBiotech 2010, a panel of experts are presenting facts surrounding gene patenting, and will offer a practical perspective on whether research and innovation are in reality impeded or encouraged by patents. As the representative body of the biotechnology industry in Australia, with more than 3,000 members, Dr Anna Lavelle, CEO of AusBiotech, argued, "The protection for gene-based technologies, in the form of patents, is an essential element for the continued development of future life-changing health products."

"The future of gene-based biomedical innovation could be jeopardized by a decline in investment in the biotechnology sector if it were to lack the certainty derived from patents," Dr Lavelle continued. "A decision to ban the patenting of biological material and related technologies in Australia could lead to the decline of privately-funded medical and biotechnology research and thereby to the loss of access by the Australian public to future development in novel medicines and diagnostics. The negative impact on the health and well-being of the Australian people could be dramatic."