

Pharma in Focus

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Gene patent views sought

AusBiotech and Medicines Australia are urging anyone affected by gene patents to contribute their view to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee Inquiry into the *Patent Amendment (Human Genes and Biological Materials) Bill 2010*.

The private members Bill was referred to the Committee by the Senate on November 26. The closing date for submissions is February 25 next year. The purpose of the Bill is to amend the Patents Act 1990 to prevent the patenting of human genes and biological materials existing in nature.

Both MA and AusBiotech say amendments would have "far-reaching and possibly dire consequences for patient access, medical research and the biotechnology and medicines industry". They say potentially life-altering products may never be developed as there would be no incentive to partner with public research institutes and biotechnology to translate Australian inventions from "bench to bedside".

They add that the inclusion of human gene sequences in patents would never give the patent owner any rights or ownership of the genes that exist in the human body, and say there is little or no significant evidence to support the contention that gene patents stifle research. **SDT**