

Media Release



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Minister's GM debate opens doors for scientists - but shuts out business

Minister for Food and Agriculture, Kim Chance last night told a public forum that he had only ever received one request to fund research into the effects of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and subsequently provided more than \$92,000 to that South Australian study.

Minister Chance suggested that he would consider further funding requests associated with the technology.

AusBiotech, Australia's Biotechnology Organisation said that while it was pleasing to hear the Minister effectively invite funding submissions from local scientists, they were deeply concerned that the Minister appeared to have no details of the single study he has chosen to fund or the process associated with applying for the funding.

Dr Ian Edwards, Chair of the AusBiotech Ag Committee said "The core concerns expressed by the farmers and scientists able to attend last night were about transparency and accountability,".

On several occasions, Mr Chance said he had 'no idea' about the total cost of the study and was unwilling to provide detail about the research WA is funding in SA.

"Given that there was no tender or public notice for the funding and the beneficiary is an outspoken anti-GM campaigner, the local scientific community is justifiably concerned," said Scott Carpenter, Program Manager for Agricultural, Environmental and Industrial Biotechnology at AusBiotech.

"Western Australian scientists are hungry for funding opportunities and their facilities are world class.

"It is deeply concerning that the Minister has chosen to fund a single study in a different jurisdiction, without even inviting local scientists to compete for the opportunity using an established Tender Process.

Minister Chance also told the 200 person audience that "this Government would uphold the moratorium..." A concern for scientists wanting to develop GM solutions for WA.

"It is disappointing that the Minister has supported anti-GM lobbyists, rather than providing an environment where GM research and commercialisation can take place" Mr Carpenter said.

"Farmers should be allowed a choice to adopt the technology if it fits with their farming practices, however without a clear path forward for the industry and an Agriculture Minister that appears opposed to the technology, WA farmers may be left behind." Said Mr Carpenter .

Further information: **Scott Carpenter**
0418 573 448
scarpenter@ausbiotech.org