

Media release



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AusBiotech 2010 looks beyond the hype of the gene patent debate to the future of gene-based innovation

As the gene patenting debate re-emerges this week, Australia's biotechnology industry organisation, AusBiotech, urges policymakers to look past the controversy and consider the myths and truths surrounding the issue.

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 acknowledges the complexity of the debate but is also 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.

At an *AusBiotech 2010* session titled 'Busting the myths about gene patenting,' a panel of experts aim to present the facts surrounding gene patenting and offer a practical perspective on whether research and innovation are in reality impeded or encouraged by patents. The session, to be held on Wednesday afternoon of *AusBiotech 2010*, in Melbourne from 19 – 22 October, will look at the facts and recently-stated misconceptions regarding the subject of a current Senate inquiry into Gene Patents.

As the representative body of the biotechnology industry in Australia, with more than 3,000 members, Dr Anna Lavelle, CEO of AusBiotech, argued that 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 jeopardised by a decline in investment by the biotechnology sector if it were to lack the certainty derived from patents," Dr Lavelle continued. "A

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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.”

Geraldine Farrell, special counsel at Griffith Hack Lawyers, will chair the session, drawing on the insights of other key experts on the issue, including:

- Dr Tania Obranovich, partner at Davis Collison Cave, who will discuss ‘Gene patenting: fact vs fiction.’
- Dr Julian Clark, head of business development at Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, who will discuss ‘Do patents hinder research? A practical perspective.’

AusBiotech 2010 is the annual conference of AusBiotech and the premier biotechnology conference for Australia and the Asia-Pacific. The conference attracts over 1400 delegates from across the world each year and is renowned for its agenda-setting programs, significant business analysis and world class Business Matching Program.

For additional event information visit the conference website at: www.ausbiotech2010.com.au.

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About AusBiotech

AusBiotech is Australia’s voice on biotechnology, and represents more than 3,000 members, encompassing medicines, medical diagnostics and devices, agriculture, alternative fuels and climate change.

A fact sheet is available from AusBiotech on the gene patent debate. For a copy of this fact sheet, further information, interviews, or media registration for *AusBiotech 2010*, please contact:

Jessica Sealby

Buchan Consulting

P: +61 3 9866 4722

M: +61 435 635 442

E: jsealby@bcg.com.au