

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

THE SENATE

COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

PERSONS REFERRED TO IN THE SENATE

**MR BOB MOSES, ON BEHALF OF
BOARD AND MANAGEMENT
OF NATIONAL STEM CELL CENTRE**

111TH REPORT

FEBRUARY 2003

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REPORT

1.1 On 12 December 2002 the President of the Senate, Senator the Honourable Paul Calvert, received an e-mailed copy of a submission dated 14 November 2002 from Mr Bob Moses, Chairman of the National Stem Cell Centre, seeking redress under the resolution of the Senate of 25 February 1988 relating to the protection of persons referred to in the Senate (Privilege Resolution 5).

1.2 The submission referred to remarks made by Senator Boswell during debate in the Senate on 12 November 2002. The President, having accepted Mr Moses' submission for the purposes of the resolution, referred the submission to the Committee of Privileges. It is unfortunate that the original submission was not received in the President's office earlier, as this would have enabled the submission to be considered at the same time as three other submissions which were the subject of the committee's 110th report.

1.3 The committee met in private session on 4 February 2003 and, pursuant to paragraph (3) of Privilege Resolution 5, decided to consider the submission. The response, which the committee now recommends for incorporation in *Hansard*, has been agreed to by Mr Moses and the committee in accordance with Resolution 5(7)(b).

1.4 The committee draws attention to paragraph 5(6) of the resolution which requires that, in considering a submission under this resolution and reporting to the Senate, the committee shall not consider or judge the truth of any statements made in the Senate or of the submission.

1.5 The committee **recommends:**

That a response by Mr Bob Moses, on behalf of the board and management of the National Stem Cell Centre, in the terms specified at Appendix One, be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Robert Ray
Chair

APPENDIX ONE

RESPONSE BY MR BOB MOSES, ON BEHALF OF BOARD AND MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL STEM CELL CENTRE, PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 5(7)(B) OF THE SENATE OF 25 FEBRUARY 1988

In the Senate debate (12 November 2002) on the Research Involving Embryos Bill 2002, Senator Ronald Boswell made a series of allegations concerning the National Stem Cell Centre (NSCC) and research funding in Australia.

I wish to bring to the attention of all Senators that few of these allegations are supported by fact and that the substance of the allegations is at best only tangentially related to the NSCC and its designated staff.

Senator Boswell's allegations are implicitly an attack on the eminent individuals responsible for administering the NH&MRC, the Australian Research Council, Biotechnology Australia, AusIndustry and the CRC Program. These organisations are among the most important R&D funding bodies in Australia. The government appoints the most highly qualified and respected individuals to panels and committees assessing the thousands of grant applications submitted to them. They operate under well-established procedures, objective assessment criteria and clear ethical guidelines. If Senator Boswell has genuine concerns about these processes, he should take them up with the bodies themselves and the Government.

The NSCC's CEO-designate, Professor Alan Trounson, is a highly qualified and globally respected scientist with an outstanding research record. It is inconceivable that these government-appointed panels and committees would allocate grants to him or his colleagues on any basis other than scientific merit.

The Senator's claims are also incorrect with respect to commercial ties. The NSCC is not presently a commercial partner of Bresagen, ESC International or any other private research company. As the centre becomes established, it will be important to nurture relationships with the private sector in order to fully develop the NSCC's research output and maximise benefits for Australia. This may or may not include the companies referred to.

As chairman of the board of the NSCC, I believe Senator Boswell's unsubstantiated remarks demean the body of Australian science and are unrelated to the substantive issues of the Bill under consideration in Parliament.

Bob Moses

Chairman, National Stem Cell Centre

Board Members:

Hon Dr. Barry Jones

Ross McCann

Dr Hugh Niall

Mark Richardson

Brian Watson

Professor Alan Trounson, CEO