

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Tourism and Resources Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2005-2006, 2 November 2005

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND RESOURCES
OUTCOME/OUTPUT: Outcome 2, Outputs 2.1 and 2.2
TOPIC: AUSTRALIAN STEM CELL CENTRE
REFERENCE: WRITTEN QUESTION

QUESTION No.SBI-95

Senator Forshaw asked:

How much funding has been provided by the Australian Government to the Australian Stem Cell Centre (ASCC) since 2002? Please provide a break-up of this funding by Department and Agency.

ANSWER

From 2002 to November 2005 the ASCC has received \$40.25 million under two Australian Government programs. This comprises \$36.25 million under the Biotechnology Centre of Excellence program, jointly administered by DITR (\$17.5 million) and the Australian Research Council (\$18.75 million), and \$4 million under the Major National Research Facilities program, administered by the Department of Education, Science and Training.

QUESTION No.SBI-96 and No.SBI-97

Senator Forshaw asked:

Is the ASCC required to report to the Federal Government on how it has expended such funds?

If so, have these reports been provided to the Government? Please provide a copy of the reports to the Committee if available.

ANSWER

Under the Biotechnology Centre of Excellence Deed of Agreement the ASCC provides the Australian Government with Annual, Mid-Financial Year and two Quarterly Reports (for the March and September quarters) each year. These Reports outline the strategic, commercial and research priorities of the ASCC. They identify the prioritisation of ASCC activities, commercial strategies, potential collaborators, research areas and therapeutic targets.

The disclosure of these Reports would undermine the ASCC's commercial interest vis-à-vis its commercial competitors and would prejudice the ASCC's ability to deliver against its objectives under the Deed. DITR consulted the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources. The Minister has determined that the ASCC's reports contain commercially-sensitive information and should not be released for the reasons stated above. A letter signed by the Minister confirming his decision not to release the ASCC reports is attached.

In addition to these confidential reports, the ASCC has produced a Public Annual Report which is available on the ASCC's website (<http://www.stemcellcentre.edu.au>). A copy of the latest Public Annual Report has been provided to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee Secretariat.

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Attachment



The Hon Ian Macfarlane MP
Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources

PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Senator George Brandis
Chair, Senate Economics Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Brandis

- 7 DEC 2005

I write in regard to Senator Forshaw's written request to my Department for copies of the Australian Stem Cell Centre's (ASCC) reports to the Australian Government as part of the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing on 2 November 2005.

The ASCC provides five reports each year: an Annual Report, a Mid-Financial Year Report, two Quarterly Reports and a Public Annual Report. The ASCC's Annual Report, Mid-Financial Year Report and Quarterly Reports contain information that I have deemed to be commercial-in-confidence and therefore can not be provided to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee.

My decision to withhold the ASCC's Reports is based on the fact that disclosure of these Reports would prejudice the ASCC's intellectual property rights and would compromise its commercial and research strategies. The Government would place the ASCC at a substantial disadvantage by providing the ASCC's competitors with commercially sensitive information.

For these reasons, I do not propose to release the ASCC's Annual, Mid-Financial or Quarterly Reports to the Senate Committee. The ASCC's Public Annual Report does not contain any commercial-in-confidence material and this report will be made available to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Macfarlane'.

Ian Macfarlane