

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Additional Estimates Hearings 2002-2003, 10-11 February 2003

Question: PM 73

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Grant to establish the National Biotechnology Centre of Excellence

Direct on Notice

Senator Harradine asked:

1. It was reported in the Age of 25 December that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet had completed a review of Professor Alan Trounson's use of a video of a crippled rat, which suggested the rat was cured using human ES cells, and had decided not to pursue the matter further. Please provide me with a copy of the results of the review.

Answer: The Age article refers to the review of the process to select the National Biotechnology Centre of Excellence undertaken for the Prime Minister by Mr Geoff Allen, Chairman of the Allen Consulting Group. Mr Allen's report was tabled in the Senate on 5 March 2003.

Outcome 1, Output 2.1

Topic: Inter-departmental committee review of the Customs regulations ban on the export of human embryos.

Direct on Notice

Senator Harradine asked:

- 2. I understand that an inter-departmental review will be undertaken of the Customs regulations ban on the export of human embryos.**
- a) What are the terms of reference of the committee?**
 - b) What are the names of the officers on the committee and their departmental affiliations?**
 - c) What is the plan for how the review will be undertaken?**
 - d) What is the aim of the review ie. will it be focused on achieving an ethical outcome, advancing the research interests of scientists in this area or a commercial outcome?**
 - e) Will the results of the review be made public? If not, why not?**
 - f) Has the Prime Minister received representations from individuals or organisations lobbying against the ban on the export of human embryos? If so, who are the individuals/organisations and would you please provide copies of the correspondence?**
 - g) Will the review be considered by the Prime Minister? If not, why not? Who will make the final decision?**

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Answer:

- a) The terms of reference of the committee have not been agreed as yet.
- b) The committee will be formed in the near future. It is anticipated that officers from the Health Portfolio and the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Industry, Tourism and Resources, Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Australian Customs Service will form the committee.
- c) When the inter-departmental committee is formed, it will determine with the approval of the relevant ministers the most appropriate way of handling the review.
- d) It will review the ban on the export of human embryos and consider longer term options for regulation in this area. The focus and scope of the review will be determined by the inter-departmental committee and the relevant ministers.
- e) The relevant ministers will determine whether the outcome of the review will be made public.
- f) The Prime Minister has not received representations from individuals or organisations lobbying against the ban on the export of human embryos.
- g) The review will be considered at ministerial level. The matter of who will make the final decision on the review will need to be discussed with the Prime Minister.

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Grant to establish the National Biotechnology Centre of Excellence

Direct on Notice

Senator Harradine asked:

3. On Christmas Eve the Prime Minister announced that he had received “an independent report from Mr Geoff Allen, Chairman of the Allen Consulting Group, on the process for selecting the Biotechnology Centre for Excellence”. Would you please provide me with a copy of this report, including the terms of reference.

Answer: The Report by Mr Allen was tabled in the Senate on 5 March 2003. This included a full set of the terms of reference for the review.