

SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO GENE PATENTS

Terms of Reference

The Senate has referred the following matter to the Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report by the last sitting day of 2009. The Senate has extended the reporting time for the Gene Patents Inquiry until 18 March 2010. The Committee sought this extension due to the extensive evidence received and the complex nature of many issues associated with this inquiry.

While the Committee has had some discussion over the conclusions and recommendations that it may reach in its report to the Senate, it requires further time to give more detailed consideration to the complex issues involved and to assess the range of opinions that were expressed in evidence during the inquiry.

The impact of the granting of patents in Australia over human and microbial genes and non-coding sequences, proteins, and their derivatives, including those materials in an isolated form, with particular reference to:

- (a) the impact which the granting of patent monopolies over such materials has had, is having, and may have had on:
 - (i) the provision and costs of healthcare,
 - (ii) the provision of training and accreditation for healthcare professionals,
 - (iii) the progress in medical research, and
 - (iv) the health and wellbeing of the Australian people;
- (b) identifying measures that would ameliorate any adverse impacts arising from the granting of patents over such materials, including whether the *Patents Act 1990* should be amended, in light of the any matters identified by the inquiry; and
- (c) whether the *Patents Act 1990* should be amended so as to expressly prohibit the grant of patent monopolies over such materials.

Written submissions are invited and should be addressed to:

The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Closing date for the receipt of submissions is 19 March 2009.

The Committee prefers to receive submissions electronically as an attached document - email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Submissions become Committee documents and are made public only after a decision by the Committee. Publication of submissions includes loading them onto the internet and their being available to other interested parties including the media. Persons making submissions must not release them without the approval of the

Committee. Submissions are covered by parliamentary privilege but the unauthorised release of them is not protected.

Following consideration of submissions, the Committee will hold public hearings. The Committee will consider all submissions and may invite individuals and organisations to give evidence at the public hearings.

Information relating to Senate Committee inquiries, including notes to assist in the preparation of submissions for a Committee, can be located on the internet at http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/wit_sub/index.htm

For further details contact the Committee Secretary, Phone: (02) 6277 3515, Fax: (02) 6277 5829 E-mail: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au