

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Tourism and Resources Portfolio
Additional Estimates 2004-2005, 16 February 2005

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND RESOURCES
OUTCOME/OUTPUT: Outcome 2, Output 2.2
TOPIC: PRESENTATION AT THE AUSTRALIAN STEM CELL CENTRE SECOND SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE
REFERENCE: HANSARD 16/02/05, PAGES E69-72

QUESTION No.27
(Hansard 16/02/05, p.E69)

Senator Harradine asked about:

In relation to the presentation given by Mr Cormick at the Australian Stem Cell Centre Second Scientific Conference on 23 November 2004 ... could the committee have the notes for the address?

ANSWER

There are no speaking notes.

QUESTION No.28
(Hansard 16/02/05, pp.E71-72)

Senator Harradine asked about:

Could the committee be given details about the basis for the presentation and the sources of the statements made by Mr Cormick?

ANSWER

As indicated in responses to 2004-05 Supplementary Budget Estimates questions on notice (Answer 24), the presentation was compiled by Mr Cormick; Dr Adrienne Torda, the Senior Staff Specialist at the Prince of Wales Hospital and Senior Lecturer in Medical Ethics at the Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine at the University of Sydney; and Tamra Lysaght, doctoral student at the Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine at the University of Sydney.

Mr Cormick's slides were slides numbered 2 – 17. Slides 18 to 24 were compiled by Dr Torda and represent her summation of data. Copies of the slides were provided to the Committee on 27 January 2005 with the responses to the 2004-05 Supplementary Budget Estimates questions on notice.

The statements on slide 2 have been taken from a report, *Public Perceptions of Agricultural Biotechnologies in Europe*, funded by the European Community in 2001. The statements are listed in the report as 'Myths held by stakeholders regarding genetically modified organisms'. Similar statements and comments have been made by researchers and biotechnology advocates as to the causes of community concerns about biotechnology in Australia at industry fora and consultations held by Biotechnology Australia.

The purpose of Mr Cormick's presentation, as the first of three presenters in the Conference session, was to challenge existing notions that are held about the public's attitudes towards scientific research and then provide information on the findings of surveys on public attitudes to stem cell-related research and ethical concerns.

Slide 2 needs to be understood in the context in which it was presented. In Mr Cormick's part of the presentation, the statements on slide 2 were presented one by one and the audience members were asked to raise their hand if they agreed with the statement. In line with the usual outcome at such fora, the majority of participants at the session raised their hands to each statement, confirming that these are popular beliefs amongst the research community in particular.

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Tourism and Resources Portfolio
Additional Estimates 2004-2005, 16 February 2005

At the conclusion of the consideration of slide 2 the audience was informed that the statements on the slide were not wholly accurate. The presentation then moved on to demonstrate that perceptions of attitudes can be different to actual attitudes and that any effective communications with the general public need to be based on a two-way communication flow, rather than a one-way flow (slides 3 to 6). This was followed by presentation of the findings of Biotechnology Australia survey work (slides 7-14). Slide 15 was then shown which contains a summary of key influences of attitudes about stem cell research from a research study undertaken at Swinburne University. The study was published under the title 'Understanding Australian Perceptions of Controversial Scientific Research' in the *Australian Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, Volume 2, No 2, 2004. Slide 15 includes a note identifying the study as the source for the information on the slide. Slides 16 and 17 contained only a title and question, respectively, as a lead-in to the next part of the presentation, which was given by Dr Torda.

As has previously been provided, the two main sources of information for the survey data presented in slides 3 to 6 are from the studies conducted for Biotechnology Australia by Market Attitude Research Services in 2002, 2003 and 2004, and the studies conducted by Yann Campbell Hoare Wheeler/Millward Brown in 1999, 2001 and 2003 on public attitudes to biotechnology.

Both companies follow accepted best practice in the methodology for the surveys. They use random telephone polling of a minimum of a thousand people to obtain data and seek to achieve a representative sample of the Australian community. Yann Campbell Hoare Wheeler/Millward Brown also undertakes qualitative focus group studies to supplement and validate the quantitative research.