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SENATOR NATASHA STOTT DESPOJA
AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS SCIENCE AND BIOTECHNOLOGY SPOKESPERSON

COMMITTEE SUPPORTS STEM CELL BILLS

Democrats' Science and Biotechnology Spokesperson Senator Natasha Stott Despoja, who played a key role in ensuring a Senate committee examined Australia's stem cell research laws, today said she was excited the Senate Community Affairs Committee had recommended progressing the laws.

"I am proud that my bill, the *Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT) and Related Research Amendment Bill 2006*, co-sponsored by Senator Ruth Webber, was the catalyst for this committee process and was one of two bills examined by the committee," Senator Stott Despoja said.

"This inquiry was completed in a very short time frame, as is typical of inquiries under this Government-controlled Senate; however, I am pleased that the majority of the committee support changing current legislation to allow the scientific recommendations of the Lockhart Review to be implemented."

The committee reviewed 492 submissions from interested individuals and organisations and held public hearings in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne.

The Senate will have less than a week to consider the committee's report before debate on whether to amend the *Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2002* and the *Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002* commences on November 6.

"I'm glad that the Exposure Draft bill has been pivotal in the drafting of Senator Patterson's

bill and the committee's work," Senator Stott Despoja said.

"As the committee has identified a number of areas where our bill is preferable, I will pursue some amendments to the legislation."

Senator Stott Despoja's announcement in March this year that she would table a Private Member's Bill to implement the scientific recommendations of the Lockhart Review encouraged parliamentary interest in this issue and prompted the Prime Minister to allow a conscience vote.

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