

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Brisbane Emerges as the Most Rapidly Developing Cluster of Stem Cell Scientists in Australia**

**Thursday 3 April, 2008. Brisbane, Australia:**

**Today, Senator the Hon. Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, opened the Australian Stem Cell Centre's (ASCC) Brisbane laboratories at the University of Queensland.**

The ASCC's Queensland laboratories include the first human embryonic stem cell production facility in the state. The ASCC's human embryonic stem cell lines are now available to Brisbane based stem cell scientists who are using the cells to investigate the potential of the cells in the treatment of blood related diseases and kidney disease.

The Queensland cell lines are expanded from existing human embryonic stem cell lines, known as MEL1 and MEL2, created in Melbourne.

The ASCC's Queensland node, links scientists from four internationally renowned Brisbane based research institutes.

"This State has everything to offer in terms of outstanding facilities, first class institutes, outstanding scientific talent and a lifestyle that no state can match," said Professor Vicki Sara, Chair of the ASCC.

The ASCC employs scientists within their own dedicated laboratories on the University of Queensland campus with the ASCC's Chief Scientist, Professor Melissa Little, also based at the Queensland laboratories. The ASCC also funds six external research groups in Brisbane.

The ASCC's core scientific focus is in the area of haematology (blood), and the genesis of a safe, transfusable blood product from various stem cell types.

The central project for the majority of the Queensland group is the investigation, using various adult and cord blood stem cells, of the development of manufactured blood products such as red blood cells, white blood cells (neutrophils) and platelets, the blood cells that initiate blood clotting.

Professor Stephen Livesey, Chief Executive Officer of the ASCC said, “Brisbane is a very attractive base for our second major hub. This development represents a strengthening and acceleration of the ASCC’s science strategy, towards developing a product that can save and improve the lives of patients with blood related diseases.”

Other projects in Queensland include the application of adult stem cells to kidney disease and heart disease, as well as investigations into normal tissue repair, comparisons between different stem cell types, investigations into the safety and efficacy of embryonic stem cells, and the development of processes to scale up cell numbers.

The headquarters of the ASCC and the first major cluster was established in 2003 and is based in Melbourne, Victoria. This Melbourne cluster links together a number of stem cell organisations and infrastructure with the ASCC.

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*Listing of key people available for interview:*

- Professor Vicki Sara - Chair (ASCC)
- Professor Stephen Livesey - CEO (ASCC)
- Professor Melissa Little - CSO (ASCC)
- Dr Teija Peura - Director, Human Embryonic Stem Cell Laboratories (ASCC)
- Professor Justin Cooper-White – AIBN
- Professor Lars Nielsen – The University of Queensland

## **Background**

### **ASCC**

The **Australian Stem Cell Centre** is Australia's Biotechnology Centre of Excellence. The Centre has partnered with ten leading Australian universities and research institutions, and brings together a critical mass of outstanding Australian stem cell research that is internationally competitive and well regarded.

The Centre's vision is to undertake research of the highest quality in the stem cell field, in order to discover and ultimately commercialise new therapies for human disease.

The Australian Stem Cell Centre is funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments.

### **The ASCC Queensland Node**

The ASCC node represents the collaboration and linking together of the ASCC Melbourne laboratories with the University of Queensland, Australian Institute for Nanotechnology and Biotechnology, the Institute for Molecular Biosciences and the Mater Medical Research Institute.

#### **Research groups funded by the ASCC in Brisbane include:**

- Professor Kerry Atkinson - Mater Medical Research Institute
- Professor Melissa Little - IMB / University of Queensland
- Professor Justin Cooper-White - AIBN / University of Queensland
- Professor Lars Nielsen - AIBN / University of Queensland
- Professor Peter Gray - AIBN / University of Queensland
- Dr Sean Grimmond - IMB / University of Queensland