

INTERIM OFFICE OF GENE TECHNOLOGY REGULATOR
Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care

MEDIA RELEASE

Gene Technology regulations in Australia will be among world's best practice

A call to 'freeze' the Gene Technology Bill 2000, introduced into Federal Parliament recently, by the Australian Conservation Foundation's GeneEthics Network stems from a baseless accusation that research into transgenic goats would be exempt under the proposed legislation, according to Elizabeth Cain, Head of the Interim Office of the Gene Technology Regulator.

"The transgenic goats, which are goats that contain human genes to produce human albumin in their milk, will be covered by the new bill that will potentially be among world's best practice in the area of gene technology regulation," Ms Cain said.

"Currently the work on these transgenic goats is subject to the Genetic Manipulation Advisory Committee's guidelines in which approval for this type of research must be sought from an institutional bio-safety committee.

"GMAC is aware of this research and the South Australian Research and Development Institute which is creating these transgenic goats, is fully complying with the GMAC guidelines and subsequently the research is subject to vigorous safety guidelines.

"These guidelines have been in place for decades and fortunately researchers in the area of gene technology have to a great extent operated according to the GMAC guidelines on a voluntary basis.

"However, it is time to move on from the voluntary guidelines and put in place stringent legislation that enables comprehensive assessment of all genetically modified organisms (GMOs), thorough monitoring and extensive enforcement powers," she said.

Ms Cain said an early draft of the Gene Technology Regulations which underpin the bill, will shortly be made available for public comment.

"The IOGTR will be accepting written comments on the draft regulations which will be circulated for a second round of community consultations, including public meetings," she said.

"The IOGTR welcomes individuals and organisations, particularly the Australian Conservation Foundation, to make the most of this opportunity to examine such an important public health bill," she said.

Media contact: Karen Warner 02 6270 4314
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