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RCPA urges Parliament to support gene patent reform

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia continues to urge Parliament to work towards gene patent reform, despite a Senate Committee's rejection of the Patent Amendment Bill, aimed at preventing commercial monopolisation of human genes.

The College is in full support of the Cancer Council's proposal to hold a roundtable meeting with all relevant parties and stakeholders to redevelop a legislative approach to the issue. The discussion would need to address concerns such as research investments as well as the potential risk and issues surrounding the commercial monopolisation of human biological material.

"Having a patent system which allows us to carry out our work, while protecting the public's interest from gene monopolies and maintaining a good level of research investment, is paramount," says Dr Graeme Suthers, Chairman of the College's Genetics Advisory Committee

"We want to ensure that useful medical testing of high quality is available to all Australians. Our concerns remains that gene patents have compromised the ability of medical labs to meet this goal".

"We recognise that patents are an essential and welcome component of contemporary medical care. After all, our labs are full of patented machines and processes. However, patents should not restrict equitable access to a medical genetic test".

"We welcome the suggestion that there be a fresh approach to developing greater dialogue between stakeholders to achieve a better outcome for the community as a whole," says Dr Suthers.

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