



February 4, 2016

Re: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Prohibition of Live Imports of Primates for Research) Bill 2015

Dear Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications:

The Society for Neuroscience, a global organization of nearly 40,000 scientists and clinicians who study the brain and nervous system, supports the research community in Australia and opposes the ban on the importation of captivity-bred nonhuman primates proposed in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Prohibition of Live Imports of Primates for Research) Bill 2015. This constraint would have disastrous consequences for Australia's ability to conduct biomedical research critical for health advances. We underscore that, for the foreseeable future, research with nonhuman primates will remain essential for human health and scientific advances.

Research with non-human primates is essential to advancing our understanding of and working towards cures for diseases and disorders like Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and spinal cord injury. These animal models are critical to understand how the brain works and the causes of these devastating neurologic and psychiatric disorders and diseases. Scientists must continue this valuable research to understand these conditions and to find innovative ways to treat patients.

The bill under consideration jeopardizes the genetic diversity of the existing Australian research colonies and the future availability to import unique models from other laboratories in the world, including transgenic animals for disorders such as autism. In order to ensure accurate scientific results and to maintain healthy and viable colonies, it is important to introduce new animals into established research colonies. This will require importing animals from other countries to avoid inbreeding, consequent diseases, and loss of fertility in Australia's existing breeding colonies.

The ultimate consequence of the proposed legislation will be the loss of critical research resources that will be devastating for Australian science. We, therefore, urge you to reject the proposed ban on importation of nonhuman primates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Mar Sanchez', with a horizontal line underneath.

M. Mar Sanchez, Ph.D.  
Chair, Committee on Animals in Research  
Society for Neuroscience