



**Premier of Queensland
and Minister for Trade**

QUEENSLAND SCORES GENE TECHNOLOGY COUP

Washington, DC: Premier Peter Beattie has congratulated another Queensland company for taking a global lead and making a biotechnology breakthrough which may help combat cancer, AIDS and Hepatitis C.

Speaking at BIO2003, the world's biggest biotech conference and exhibition in Washington, Mr Beattie said Brisbane-based Benitec was set to take on the world after securing patents in the US and UK for its gene technology.

"Benitec's technology works by 'shutting off', or silencing, genes in any organism – humans, animals (including pests,) and plants," Mr Beattie said.

"This technology has the potential to be used in people to shut off the rogue genes that cause diseases and viruses like AIDS, Hepatitis C and cancer.

"I'm delighted that Benitec has locked in patents in the US and UK to use this technology in humans and animals for a range of research applications and drug development.

"These are huge global markets, and open up big opportunities for this Smart State Company in terms of global partnerships and revenues."

Innovation Minister Paul Lucas also congratulated Benitec on its success.

"This research was done in the Department of Primary Industries' agri-biotechnology centre in Brisbane," Mr Lucas said.

"The Queensland Government is a joint owner of the core technology, while Benitec has exclusive worldwide rights of commercialisation.

"This is an example of successful partnerships between public and private entities taking leading research through to its commercial potential.

"This is the kind of result we're seeking to encourage with our Smart State strategy for Queensland."

Executive chairman of Benitec, John McKinley, said he believed the company's technology was the most important of its kind to be developed in biotech in the past decade.

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“This technology has enormous potential in humans,” Mr McKinley said.

“With these patents, we can explore the use of this technology in a range of applications.

“Initially we are concentrating on research in the human field, working with partners in Australia and the USA to demonstrate the technology’s effect in silencing or shutting off the genes that cause diseases such as cancers, diabetes, psoriasis, HIV, AIDS, hepatitis C and Alzheimer's disease.

“Our technology also has potential for use against major Third World parasitic diseases, including malaria, as well as global animal diseases such as and Foot and Mouth and BSE.”

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