



Biotech Daily

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Daily news on ASX-listed biotechnology companies

Senator Michaelia Cash Appointed Innovation Minister

Biotech Daily Editorial Comment

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has appointed Acting Innovation Minister Senator Michaelia Cash as Minister for Jobs and Innovation.

Senator Cash replaces Senator Arthur Sinodinos, who was the Minister for Industry Innovation and Science, but said that he had taken leave to be treated for cancer.

Senator Cash was formerly the Minister for Employment and Women.

A Ministerial list provided by Senator Cash's office said that Craig Laundy had been moved from Assistant Minister for Innovation to the Minister for Small and Family Business, Workplace and Deregulation; with Senator Zed Saselja appointed as Assistant Minister for Science, Jobs and Innovation, previously Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs.

BIOTECH DAILY EDITORIAL

Another day, another Minister.

As her then media officer David De Garis told Biotech Daily shortly before he took the fall for calling the cameras to the Federal Police raid on the Australian Workers Union, Senator Cash is a "pocket rocket", meaning that although small in stature, she is feisty, fierce and focussed.

If Senator Cash could focus on her portfolio rather than using it to further her Party's and her own political ambitions, that would be excellent.

Sadly, the Abbott-Turnbull Liberal National Governments have shown little or no appetite for innovation or biotechnology – despite our own large, prosperous, export-income earning companies, not to mention our close relationship with foreign large pharmaceutical firms.

The funding has been meagre (as it was under the previous Rudd-Gillard Governments) and lacking in creativity.

Mr Turnbull's penny-pinching 1.5 percent cut to the Research and Development Tax Incentive is not compensated by other initiatives.

Mr Turnbull's claim two years ago to put innovation at the centre of his Government has been shown to be utterly hollow.

Senator Cash is our fourth Innovation Minister in two years, following Christopher Pyne, Greg Hunt and Senator Arthur Sinodinis, not to mention Mr Abbott's Innovation Minister Ian Macfarlane, making five in four years.

But it gets worse. Senator Zed Saselja has distinguished himself as a conservative within the Turnbull Government and was one of three lawyers forced to withdraw disparaging comments about Victoria's Courts and its Judges.

Senator Saselja has opposed meaningful action on climate change and spoke against the Marriage Equality Bill.

He is simply "out of touch with community expectations" as they say in politics.

The only silver lining on the black cloud of this Government's innovation decision-making is that former Assistant Innovation Minister Craig Laundry has been moved sideways to Small Business which remains within the Department.

Mr Laundry has shown great interest in innovation and a talent for communicating the issues.

There has been widespread criticism of the Ministerial reshuffle and our sector has not been spared.

David Langsam
Editor