

**Independent External Research Misconduct Inquiry
Published Summary Panel Report**

IN THE MATTER OF ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT AGAINST DR M. DEMASI

Background

1. On 27 April 2018, an Independent External Research Misconduct Inquiry Panel (“Panel”) convened by the University provided its report to the Vice-Chancellor (“Report”). The Panel’s purpose was to investigate allegations of research misconduct against Dr Maryanne Demasi, a former student of the University (“Respondent”).

Allegations

2. The Panel considered 17 specific allegations each of which alleged that particular images within figures in the Respondent’s 2004 thesis (“Thesis”) had been duplicated and/or manipulated in a manner that deviated from the applicable standards at the relevant time. All of the impugned figures depicted the results of Western or Northern Blot experiments conducted by the Respondent. The Respondent firmly denied any research misconduct.

The External Panel

3. The Panel comprised the Honourable John Sulan, QC, former justice of the Supreme Court of South Australia, who acted as Chair; Professor Moira O’Bryan, Head of the School of Biological Sciences, Monash University; Professor Jacqueline Phillips, Professor of Neuroscience, Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Macquarie University; and Professor Peter Schofield, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Neuroscience Research Australia, NSW, and School of Medicine, University of New South Wales.

Reports and Evidence

4. The Panel received reports from an expert in forensic image analysis and two experts in the standards applicable to the presentation of Northern and Western blot images at the relevant time. They also received witness statements from the Respondent herself, her Thesis supervisors and a senior researcher in her laboratory at the relevant time. All of these witnesses subsequently attended at a hearing before the Panel and were examined by Counsel Assisting the Panel and counsel for the Respondent.
5. The evidence established that the original x-ray films which corresponded with the impugned figures had been discarded, in accordance with appropriate records management requirements, or lost in the fourteen years since the completion of the Thesis. The expert in forensic image analysis warned that it would be “dangerous” for the Panel to make any findings of duplication in the absence of these original films. The Panel accepted this evidence. They could not be satisfied that duplication had taken place in respect of the 14 specific allegations where the Respondent had denied duplication.
6. In respect of the three remaining specific allegations, the Respondent admitted that she had duplicated or probably duplicated the relevant impugned images. However, she understood that duplication was acceptable at the relevant time for the particular category of images at issue. The relevant experts agreed, albeit they considered duplication was not best practice. The Panel accepted this evidence. They could not be satisfied that the duplication constituted a deviation from the applicable standards at the relevant time.

Finding of the Panel

7. In summary, on the basis of all of the evidence before the Panel, the Panel could not be satisfied that any research misconduct had occurred.

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