

The Secretary
House of Representatives
Legal and Constitutional Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT

Submission to the Inquiry into Human Cloning

As a citizen, and as a holder of a Doctorate in Philosophy, I submit the view that ethical concerns regarding research into human cloning should not be exaggerated, and should not unnecessarily impede the very valuable benefits such research may bring.

Ours is a pluralistic culture. Ethically, Australians approach questions of social regulation from a variety of viewpoints. Some are religious, some are not. Some hold that there are abstract, universal principles, some that ethics is essentially personal expression. Other approaches, too numerous to canvass here, exist. Unfortunately, there are some who hold that their own particular approach is the only one that can be called ethical, and fail to recognize the value of other approaches. It would be unfortunate if the Standing Committee holding the Inquiry into Human Cloning were persuaded to regulate research according to the concerns of one such group because of a mistaken confidence in

As well as being pluralistic, ours is a pragmatic culture. Whatever our disagreements on systems of ethics or on the meaning of undefined terms such as human dignity or shared values, we recognize the enormous practical benefits of medical research. Who would not welcome a cure for cancer? Human cloning research might provide a cure. And who knows what other therapies might become available for real people undergoing real suffering, if only we could acquire the knowledge to deal with their ailments. Ethical considerations are as much about consequences as principles. To place regulatory barriers to the therapeutic alleviation of suffering would be a grave ethical error.

In the public debate on this issue, fears have been expressed that humans might be fully replicated for nefarious (though unstated) purposes, reminiscent of Frankenstein horror stories, the nineteenth century prohibition of autopsies, and more recently the novel "Brave New World". Horror stories should not divert our attention from the real issues, however. The replication of complete humans is not the intent of researchers. Indeed, why should it be? The understanding of DNA, the multiplication of cells, and the alleviation of disease are the aims of research into human cloning, aims which are laudable and to be encouraged.

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