

1 September, 2000

Ms Catherine Cornish
Acting Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Legal
and Constitutional Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Catherine Cornish

Thank you for your letter of August 23rd, 2000 about the Committee's enquiry into matters related to human cloning.

I think that the Gene Technology Bill 2000 is unrelated to the consideration of human cloning. I say this because under the definition of genetically modified organisms in attachment A it is quite clear that a cloned individual or cell line has not been modified by gene technology, has not inherited traits induced by gene technology, and hence is **not** a genetically modified organism. It is true that in sheep there have been successful attempts to use cloning in conjunction with gene technology to produce genetically modified cloned offspring, but this is certainly not the intention for any of the proposals that I have seen for human therapeutic cloning. Clearly, if any investigator wanted to combine human therapeutic cloning with gene technology then this would indeed come under the proposed Gene Technology Bill, but that is far into the future as far as I am concerned.

I think it would be most important that the members of the Committee obtained the final report of the Liam Donaldson Committee report to the British Government which was made public two weeks ago, and which in essence approves the use of surplus human embryos for the production of human embryonic stem cells, and also approves therapeutic cloning, i.e. the production of human embryonic stem cells from an embryo that has itself been produced by cloning from a human somatic cell nucleus transferred to an enucleated unfertilised human egg. The fact the British Government have reviewed this at great length should give the House of Representatives Committee considerable reassurance that the Australian scientific community is not alone in pressing for legislative approval of human therapeutic cloning, which most emphatically is not anything to do with genetic modification of humans.

Yours sincerely

Professor R. V. Short FAA FRS