



Elton Humphery
Committee Secretary
Selection of Bills Committee
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

13 September 2002

Dear Mr Humphery,

Re. Research involving embryos and prohibition of human cloning Bill 2002

The following document has been prepared in response to a letter dated 23 August 2002, written on behalf of the Australian Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee.

This letter forms the submission by ES Cell International (ESI) to address issues contained in the *Research involving embryos and prohibition of human cloning Bill 2002*, now superseded by the *Research Involving Embryos Bill 2002* and the *Prohibition of Human Cloning Act*, currently undergoing review in Australian Parliament.

Human embryonic stem (hES) cell research could become the foundation for the development of the most groundbreaking human therapies to date. Stem cell-based regenerative medicine promises more permanent solutions and even cures to a number of debilitating diseases which presently affect a significant proportion of the community, and whose existing treatments are resource intense and create a considerable financial burden for the Australian public healthcare system.

The opportunities surrounding hES cell research have been recognised and endorsed by advisory bodies in the UK, the US, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region, and many governments around the world have demonstrated active support for this important new field of research.

ESI is conscious of the variety of views held surrounding the ethics of hES cell research, and respects the belief systems which form the basis for many of the views held. Moreover, ESI has an enormous respect for human life, and acknowledges that the opportunity to pursue hES cell research is indeed a great privilege.

The means by which the community at large has been able to debate and review the proposed stem cell regulatory framework in Australia reflects the quality and comprehensiveness of the Parliamentary process in this country.

ESI support the terms and conditions outlined in both the *Research Involving Embryos Bill 2002* and the *Prohibition of Human Cloning Act*, which seek to govern for the following key outcomes:

- a. prohibit the creation, importation, exportation or implantation of a human embryo clone;
- b. prohibit the creation, importation, exportation or implantation of certain other embryos for ethical and safety reasons;



- c. establish a principal committee within the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the NHMRC Embryo Research Licensing Committee, for the purposes of performing functions and exercising powers under the Bill (specifically: *Research Involving Embryos Bill 2002*);
- d. establish a scheme for the assessment and licensing of certain activities involving the use of excess embryos created by assisted reproductive technology (excess ART embryos); and
- e. provide for a centralised, publicly available database of information about all licenses issued by the NHMRC Licensing Committee (excluding confidential commercial information).

ESI understands the rationale for the Sunset Clause which applies to the *Research Involving Embryos Bill 2002*, and strongly endorses the review of both Bills by an independent review committee.

Australia is a world leader in stem cell research and has always exhibited progressive policy development surrounding new technology. A political environment supportive of stem cell research is one reason why ESI has invested so considerably in Australia, and will be a significant factor in relation to our future investment decisions.

To remain globally competitive, Australia must continue to embrace development of a regulatory environment that is progressive, flexible and promotes the advancement of novel technologies within reasonable regulatory boundaries.

ESI looks forward to developing the potential of human embryonic stem cell research in Australia.

If you would like clarification of any submission statements or the position of ES Cell International, please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

Yours faithfully,

Robert Klupacs
Chief Executive Officer
ES Cell International Pte Ltd

Catriona King
Chief Operating Officer
ES Cell International Pte Ltd