

Additional Comments in Support of the Bill

1. We reject the assertion that supporting the Lockhart recommendations means compromising on ethics and human rights. While we acknowledge that an embryo is deserving of respect, the qualities that give humans their dignity and special status are not present in a 14 day old embryo ([Sub. 2](#), [Sub. 8](#), [Sub. 20b](#), [Sub. 74](#).)
2. Independent polls demonstrate broad community support for this research. While the views of minorities must always be respected, they should not override the views of the majority in such an important issue. This is not an instance of “enforcing” a majority view on all members of the community: those who object to the research are entitled to refuse to participate in it. ([Sub. 20](#), [Sub. 21](#), [Sub. 65](#).)
3. The current law allows research to be performed on excess ART embryos. Thus the Lockhart recommendations do not mean a “quantum leap” in human ethics; the proposals only ensure that the most suitable stem cells are available for the specific research being performed. ([Sub. 20b](#), [Sub. 21](#), [Sub. 73](#).)
4. Furthermore, the law already allows embryos to be created in the knowledge that some will be destroyed for the purposes of IVF. We reject the claim that the pursuit of life-saving cures is a less worthy goal than that of helping infertile couples conceive children. Both goals deserve our support. ([Sub. 2](#), [Sub. 29](#).)
5. There have been claims that the Lockhart recommendations, if accepted, will lead to women being exploited for their ova. Australia has very stringent guidelines that govern the donation of organs and tissue by living donors, and we see no reason that ova-donation should be treated any differently. The NHMRC is well-equipped to monitor and enforce guidelines to protect donors from being exploited. Women must be provided with education and counselling in order to give informed consent; the law should not treat women as being incapable of making the decision to be a living donor. ([Sub. 63](#), [Sub. 88](#), [Sub. 186](#).)
6. “Slippery slope” arguments do not hold any weight in this debate. We must not block potentially valuable research on the spurious grounds that it might in the future be used for undesirable purposes. Parliament must continually respond to advances in human discovery in accordance with community standards and human rights. We do not believe that future Parliaments will be any less capable of performing this important task.
7. The Lockhart recommendations are very clear in stressing that reproductive cloning is unacceptable and the Bills propose very serious penalties for anyone attempting to do so. All technologies bring with them a risk of misuse, but the NHMRC is highly qualified to enforce the laws and ensure that community standards are adhered to. ([Sub. 2](#), [Sub. 20](#), [Sub. 168](#).)
8. It has been argued that SCNT is unnecessary, because adult stem cell research has more promise. To the contrary, there have been numerous developments in the

field both in Australia and overseas suggesting that there is indeed great potential in SCNT. This evidence should demonstrate to Parliamentarians the urgency with which the recommendations should be implemented. This research is already being done throughout the world, and we must not allow Australia to fall further behind in the field. ([Sub. 65](#), [Sub. 73](#), [Sub. 74](#), [Sub. 93](#).)

9. While Parliament should be free to change its mind based on new arguments and better evidence, the claim that the Parliament unanimously agreed to a ban on SCNT in 2002 is inaccurate. In August 2001 the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs ([recommendation 12.42](#)) proposed that:

“There should be a moratorium on the creation of embryos by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer techniques for three years, at which point the issue should be re-examined.” ([Sub. 72](#), [Sub. 88](#).)

10. The Lockhart recommendations are the result of this process. This Government-appointed committee recommended that it is now time to lift the prohibition on SCNT. ([Sub. 20](#), [Sub. 74](#).)

11. The Lockhart Committee notes:

“In the past 3 years, the following bodies have been sufficiently convinced of the merits of the science behind ESC research and its therapeutic potential to advocate for its support: the House of Lords; the UK Legislative Review team; the majority of US Senators (almost 2/3); 80 Nobel Laureates in the US; most, if not all, of the living medical Nobel Laureates in Australia; the Australian scientist of the year, Professor Ian Frazer; the American Medical Association; and the Canadian Medical Association. It is possible, though highly improbable that these groups and individuals are all wrong about the potential of human embryonic stem cell research.” ([Sub. 20c](#).)

We urge Senators and Members to support this Bill.

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja
AD, South Australia

Senator Ruth Webber
ALP, Western Australia

Senator Claire Moore
ALP, Queensland

Senator Carol Brown
ALP, Tasmania

Senator Kerry Nettle
AG, New South Wales