

To whom it may concern,

I am gravely concerned about the recommendations of the Lockhart Committee in relation to human cloning, stem cell research and production of human/animal hybrids.

I am aware that financial incentives are driving the research into embryonic stem cells - Human embryonic stem cells are not excluded (from being patentable matter) under section 18(2) of the Patent Act 1995. Also, methods/processes for embryonic stem cell extraction, purification, culture (including media for maintenance and propagation), characterisation, and induction to differentiate, are patentable as long as the stem cells are sourced from legally obtained embryos. It is not possible to patent adult stem cells. Hence the rush to push Stott Despoja's Bill through, hence the patents flooding into our office.

Despite all the hype surrounding embryonic stem cell research, and the financial rewards associated with it, not a single successful treatment has resulted. On the other hand, the use of adult stem cells has achieved remarkable success without any of the ethical problems associated with destroying embryos. Brain Cancer, Ovarian Cancer, Lymphoma, Hodgkin's Lymphoma, Multiple Sclerosis, Crohn's Disease, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Systemic Lupus, Stroke, Parkinson's Disease and Limb Gangrene, are just a few of the list of over seventy successful treatments using adult stem cells.

The enduring success of the Aussie movie "The Castle" was based on the yearning in our hearts for respect for basic human values - some things are "just not right", no matter how much the powers that be try to push them onto the community.

Cloning and other experimentation on human embryos will never be right, no matter how the language changes to try to disguise the reality that scientists are playing with human lives. The Catholic Church is anti-IVF for just these reasons - IVF results in production of "excess" embryos - currently over 60,000 in Australia alone. These embryos are human, as human as you and I. Now they are in existence, scientists can't resist experimenting on them. In recent history, Nazi doctors couldn't resist experimenting on children, twins, and other people in the concentration camps during WW2. What is the difference?

The ethical issues surrounding the exploitation of women's bodies as "egg farms" is similarly abhorrent to basic human values. We already hear about people, particularly women and children, in underdeveloped countries being forced to donate parts of their bodies for use in the West - ranging from hair for wigs to organs for transplants - so it is just the next step that women and children will be forced to donate their eggs as well. How will examiners in the Patent Office here in IP Australia know where the eggs were harvested from? Who will be able to determine if they were "legally obtained"? How can Australia scientists and the Australian Government monitor and scrutinise all the hospitals and clinics in China, India, Africa to know what pressures will be placed on women to undergo forcible donation of their eggs?

The issues are huge and yet they are simple. The media and politicians and Government are resorting to emotional arguments to win over the community. The facts need to be reported clearly, the lies need to stop. Human life, now and in the future, needs to be valued and protected. We are the guardians of the future. We must stop this because it is our responsibility to stop it, for the generations of the future.