



Submission to the Senate Committee re: THE LOCKHART RECOMMENDATIONS

Let me say that I am gravely concerned by the recommendations made to the Government by the Lockhart Committee after reviewing the Research Involving Embryos Act 2002 and the Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2002

I cannot believe so many people elected to important positions in our parliament can be so blind, that it does not naturally occur to them that the path they are taking this country down is not only a very dangerous one but is also very morally wrong. When the general public has fallen asleep and have become lulled and educated into a false sense of security by trusting our politicians to make good decisions – (the “she’ll be right mate” mentality), it is very worrying because of the important consequences to the future of our country if wrong decisions are made on important moral issues.

Our forefathers who gave Australia the best Constitution in the world, did so with the intention of providing us with guidelines which would uphold and respect Christian human morals and values. That is why we have one of the best countries in the world.

My argument is simply this. A human being is not only a physical person, but also a spiritual person. This is why the family unit is so vital to our society. Money and greed, with help of the media, has become the driving force which has put our society under so much pressure and it is the family which is suffering, ie divorce, the breakdown of families, and the resulting statistics seen in the daily Newspapers, of crime and the behaviour of many of our youth who are confused and those who have turned to alcohol and drugs.

I cite the high suicide rate among youth, the high rate of mental illness in our society. There is a link between a materialistic and greedy society and disrespect for the value of human life eventually resulting in the breakdown of that society.

Human nature is weak and that is why our leaders must be very diligent in passing laws preventing any situation which could be exploited for monetary benefit and gain and especially which could have such a detrimental effect on human life and the future of our society. Unfortunately the very nature of this Bill has the potential to do much harm.

This Bill that has been rushed into the Senate by Senator Stott Despoja is a very flawed Bill that directly contradicts the advice of the chief scientist, Jim Peacock, who says that the use of animal eggs as part of therapeutic cloning should be banned.

“Research shows the persistence of mitochondrial DNA from the egg in cloned animal embryos. This means that under Senator Stott Despoja’s proposal, animal genetic material would be mixed with human with unknown results

“This is a radical agenda, unsupported by proof of principle research. When the topic is so sensitive, there should be plenty of evidence to support going down this path. That

evidence doesn't exist. No expert can even tell us how many eggs and how many embryos will be needed.

The extraction of human eggs is an invasive, high-risk procedure with potentially grave consequences to the life and health of women. Women have been reported to die as a result of egg donation. Studies are currently being conducted on the link between cancer and the drugs given to women to help hyper-stimulate ovulation for egg harvesting. The long-term effects of egg donation on women are still unknown and many groups are coming out against egg donation.

One group has argued, "Cloning always amounts to the commodification of women's bodies. Politicians and scientists must not use women as guinea pigs in a technology that has no proven benefits."

Regarding therapies that utilise adult stem cells, one researcher said that, while there are more than 70 different therapies that utilise adult stem cells, no cures have yet materialised using embryonic stem cells.

Umbilical-cord blood offers a complete cure for children with severe combined immunodeficiency, and it has shown positive results in brain reconstruction for some children starved of oxygen at birth, said Colin McGuckin, professor of regenerative medicine at the British University, of Newcastle upon Tyne.

I urge you to see this Bill put forward by Senator Stott-Despois for what it is. It is the next step towards the immoral production of the human embryo destined to be exploited as disposable "biological material". The last immoral step in this debate was taken when limited access to 'surplus' IVF embryos was recommended even though a ban on therapeutic cloning was accepted. This is a moral boundary which has been crossed and which has opened up the door to un-imaginable horrors if we do not make a stand against the "excesses of mans own power".

Any form of research involving "the destruction of human embryos to harvest stem cells is not only devoid of the light of God but is also devoid of humanity and does not truly serve humanity" said Pope Benedict XVI, on September 14th.

"No matter, how promising the goals of such research may be, he added, the ends can never justify means that are "intrinsically illicit".

There can be no compromise and no beating around the bush" when it comes to the direct destruction of human life – even when it is just a freshly conceived embryo, he said.

Research using adult stem cells "deserves endorsement and encouragement when it happily merges scientific knowledge, the most advanced technology, and ethics that respect the human being at every stage of life", Pope Benedict said.

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He also asked research centres which look to the church for “inspiration” to increase research in non-embryonic studies and to strengthen ties with health-care providers in proposing new therapies.

He said this to about 260 congress participants (scientists, doctors, scholars and bioethicists) at an international conference sponsored by the Pontifical Academy for Life and the World Federation of Catholic Medical Associations.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Margaret M. ALFORD
