

To Fax: 02 6277 5829

**Elton Humphery
Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

Dear Sir,

Submission concerning Cloning and Embryonic Research

We are deeply concerned at recommendations made by the Lockhart Inquiry in respect of the legalizing by Federal and State Governments of the cloning of human embryos.

We attach our submission in summarized format:

1. The distinction between therapeutic cloning and reproductive cloning is spurious and being blurred by some scientists. Any procedure to produce a human embryo is always 'reproductive' and to destroy an embryo can never be 'therapeutic'. The European Parliament has referred to this as 'sleight of hand' and the Australian Health Commission as 'lacking transparency and concealing the truth'. 'Therapeutic' cloning involves the manufacture of a class of laboratory human life with the express intention from the beginning of exploiting and destroying it, no different from the vivisection of laboratory animals.

2. Despite assurances that embryonic cloning is substantially intended for 'therapeutic' research, the general public has heard that one before when a boundary for

abortion was extended only to save the life of a mother and in a short time became abortion on demand.

Confidence and trust in the medical profession seems to be in decline. Who is bold enough to believe that some future social climate would not develop where 'extinction on demand' (as it did with abortion) became the order of the day?

3. *No research involving embryos is ever neutrally motivated.* In the case of human embryos the possibility exists that research could be motivated by deception, novelty, atypical incentives, non-therapeutic and/or commercial purposes at variance with the dignity, human rights, life expectations and ethical purposes of human reproduction.

4. The Nuremburg Code of 1947 on Permissible Medical Experiments, stated that the 'voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential' in order to avoid all unnecessary injury, mental and physical suffering. It also states that 'no experiment should be conducted where there is an *a priori* reason to believe that death or disabling injury will occur'. So-called therapeutic cloning is an attempt to breach this ethical code of medical practice.

5. It seems an arrogant assumption to regard a developing, defenceless human life as a captive commodity for vivisection and as a means to an end.

6. The USA Federal Drug Administration currently has 6,000 complaints on record (including 25 deaths) involving the safety of a hormone drug, Lupon, used on women during multiple egg extraction. These complaints are not yet investigated.

7. There is something unsavoury and dangerous about a process of power which medical specialists, motivated by experimental curiosity, can manipulate - something akin to a child pulling the wings off butterflies. It seems

cowardly on the one hand to annihilate vulnerable embryos at the beginning of life, but demand civilized consent from the terminally ill at the end of it. The principle of consistency is violated by arbitrary decision in the case of embryos.

8. Embryos, as developing human life, should be accorded the highest human value of dignity and respect. We currently give respect to patients undergoing surgical procedures in order to maximize and enhance their quality of life and health. The same dignity and compassion should be displayed towards embryos. Again, this represents inconsistency.

9. Enhancing the quality of life of an individual is one thing, but it is something entirely different to sacrifice innocent embryonic human life in order to achieve 'therapeutic' cloning. We do not believe the end justifies the means.

The power to decide life and death is awesome. Generally, no human being should have such power. If medical specialists acquire this power over embryonic life, then we have not learned the lessons of history that there are boundaries that protect us from barbarism, without which, no human life can be safe.

10. Aspects of Embryonic Stem Cell Research can be commercially patented as a profit-making process which would ensure the care of the wealthy and earn doctors considerable dollars, but both Federal and State governments would eventually be forced to heavily subsidize any costly treatments, in order to include the general public – or face accusations of discrimination.

11. Embryos may not choose to be born and are incapable of choice or consent until later growth and development, yet from conception this speck of human life *contains all the*

genetic material it will ever have until death. **If legalized, embryonic research would entrust experimental god-like power to medical scientists.**

12. The single most powerful principle involved in the extinction of human life, whether by research, abortion, euthanasia, eugenics etc., is 'a life not wanted' and therefore, disposable. How long before such a principle begins to look with a different face at those with disabilities (economic defectives?) and the fragile (economically unproductive?)?

13. The creation of embryos for research should be prohibited on the grounds that every fertilized ovum should be accorded the biological expectation of birth-life; that it should be free of genetic engineering experimentation in accordance with the Nuremburg Code of 1947 and protected as much as possible from any form of violation of its developmental expectations. Embryos have an inherent and unique right to be free of interventional research for the purpose of destroying them.

14. It is a narrowly focussed view that merely sees embryos as commodities, piece of merchandise to be exploited, utilized and manipulated for experimental curiosity and the glory of researchers. The destruction of embryonic human life offends human dignity and makes embryos, material that can be bought, sold and destroyed like laboratory rats.

15. The approval of embryonic research involves the assumption that medical researchers have a *right* to destroy human life. This is a dangerous principle. The ultimate end-point leaves no human life safe. So much for the Hippocratic Oath.

16. Some medical researchers want to play God which is OK if you are God, but for mere mortals there are ethical boundaries to human actions.

17. Despite any level of harm to the community from current embryo research appearing inexplicit at present, the potential for harm exists and embryo abuse could be undertaken under the guise of science. *Genetic research must be free of abuse* . In order to achieve respect for human life, public accountability and consistency in procedures and practices, appropriate legislation should be established by Federal and State Governments to prohibit:

- a) embryonic flushing
- b) genetic alteration of gametes
- c) alteration of the genetic, pro-nuclear or nuclear constitution of an embryo except the alteration of somatic cells for therapeutic purposes
- d) the use of gametes produced by persons under 18 years of age
- e) the use of ova derived from a foetus in a reproductive procedure produced by more than one person or in respect of created embryos, using mixed gametes
- f) transfer of a human embryo into an animal
- g) transfer of a human embryo into a body cavity other than the human female reproductive tract
- h) treatment of a woman for the purpose of producing a child of a particular sex where necessary to avoid the risk of transmission of a genetic abnormality or disease
- i) use of immediate relative donor reproductive material
- j) the placing of any cells extracted from an embryo into the body of a person
- k) genetic development using animal eggs with human cells and vice versa.
- l) collection of gametes from a dead person for use in a reproductive procedure and any other procedure

- m) transfer of a human embryo into a post-menopausal woman, and
- n) genetic screening known as a process of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD)

We hope you will reject any proposals relating to experimentation with human DNA cells, embryonic engineering and human cloning.

Yours faithfully

Jack and Nanette Blair
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