

To whom it may concern,

I understand that the Lockart Committee is making recommendations to the Government concerning the review of the Research Involving Embryos Act 2002 and the Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2002.

I am voicing my concern regarding the recommendations of the Lockart committee as a scientist, a mother and most of all as a woman.

As a scientist, I can appreciate the risks involved in research and that many scientific discoveries have been made by approaching a problem with fresh input and a curious mind. However, any scientific research must have the central premise of benefiting man kind. There has been no evidence that embryonic research and human cloning has led to successful treatment of any disease. However, the use of adult stem cells has achieved some success in diseases from ovarian cancer to limb gangrene. I realise that in some cases, scientists are at odds to the benefits of stem cell research. For example the use of adult stem cells to help stroke victims, but the overall consensus is that adult stem cells are the preferable option. Scientific research should not only benefit mankind, but should also not have to deal with ethical issues such as those of destroying human life.

As a mother, I find the idea that embryos are being “cultivated” for research purposes as totally abhorrent. Surely we, as a society, have a duty to protect life in its most earliest stages. The notion of doing research on embryos, for no proven reason, reminds me very much of the Nazi regime in Germany and their experimentation on those who were unfortunate enough to be considered sub human. Our members of society, whether they be very young, very old, handicapped or simply unable to fight for their lives and voice their concerns need to be represented and supported. We cannot have our embryos experimented upon so as to satisfy our curiosity and our “what would happen if” questions.

But the Lockart recommendations do not stop at only researching embryos. The notion of inter species fertilisation raised by the Lockart committee is not only terrifying but also very unnecessary. It makes fictional shows, such as Futurama, appear quite plausible. Surely there are no reasons for such interbreeding. No benefits other than to satisfy human curiosity. That in itself is not a good enough reason.

My final objections to the recommendations raised by the Lockart Committee come from me being a woman. Sure enough, I have the education and financial means to support my family, but what about the women who are young, less fortunate financially and also perhaps uneducated. These women will be exploited, their eggs paid for, for the sole purpose to ease the curiosity of scientists. There is no guarantee that the exploitation of women will not occur. Consider the way women in the Third world have been treated in the past. When it came to test a contraceptive implant, it was the third world women of Africa that suffered the most. Bleeding, sickness and faulty abortions were a result. The distress of the women was not acknowledged, the women not briefed about the full implications. Any benefits to those women? No, just exploitation. The women’s movement was set back centuries. If we’re not breeding machines, then we are ova producing machines. When will a women’s

fertility be respected by society and not seen as something that needs to be tampered with!!!!

I urge the Senate committee to rethink the recommendations of the Lockart Committee. Recommendations Numbers 17, 22, 24 are of particular concern to me.

Surely we should be spending more time on researching the adult stem cells techniques, an already quite promising technique.

Thank you for taking the time in reading my submission

Yours sincerely

Maria Woodbury