

I am strongly opposed to all the recommendations made in the Lockhart Report. I endorse all points made in the attached document from QRTL. I would add that even the continuation of destruction of embryos for research is unacceptable. The research which deliberately destroys one human embryo in an attempt to create another for therapeutic purposes is costly and fruitless as well as being grossly immoral.

Sincerely yours,

Paul Webb

24 April 2006

The Hon Malcolm Brough  
Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Dear Mr Brough,

I am writing to you on the topic of the forthcoming debate on the Lockhart Report, which has recommended significant changes to the legislation which currently regulates the area of embryo experimentation in Australia.

The Lockhart Report was delivered to the Federal Government on 19 December, 2005. The committee recommended the following measures:

1. **Embryos to be created specifically for the purpose of research.** Where the purpose is to acquire embryonic stem cells, this would be done through so-called “**therapeutic**” cloning. These embryos must be used and destroyed by 14 days of growth.
2. **Animal/human mix embryos (hybrids) may be created for research purposes.** This is in order to alleviate the problem of large numbers of eggs used by the usual process of embryo production in IVF. An animal egg is used instead of a human one.
3. **An extension of the “excess” embryos able to be used for experimentation from the IVF programs to include all available embryos.**
4. **A new definition of an embryo has been suggested to allow research that has so far been disallowed.** The new definition delays the assignation of the status of a human being until after the first cell division, whereas currently it is when fertilisation is considered complete, which is the standard scientific definition.
5. **Creating embryos using other means of production. This may include genetic material from more than two people.**

The following comments are numbered to respond to the points listed above.

1. It would be unconscionable for Australian governments to agree to the notion of “laboratory human beings”- a whole class of embryos whose sole purpose for existence would be to serve the interests of others, whether that be to explore causes of illness, act as subjects for drug testing, or as a supply of embryonic stem cells. This notion has previously always been rejected since the post-war days when the cruel experiments of the Nazi era came to light. Their victims were used to advance the cause of “science” as they were considered as being less than human themselves.

This same dehumanisation is seen in the words of the Lockhart Report. The human embryo clone is portrayed as “a cellular extension of the original subject” (p170) rather than another human being. The Lockhart Committee “agreed with some of its respondents who thought that the moral significance of such a cloned embryo is linked more closely to its potential for research” (p xvii).

It ignored the many respondents who believed otherwise and wrote to tell them so. A cloned human embryo has the same capacity for individual existence as its progenitor. It is the pro-

cloning lobby that seeks to win approval for their intentions by playing with words that demean both the embryos they seek to make, and humanity itself.

**“Therapeutic” cloning is the explicit creation of human life with the intention to use and then destroy. The deadline of 14 days has no biological significance. It has been borrowed from the Warnock Committee in the UK which also promoted cloning. Fourteen days was chosen as an age that the public would consider acceptable.**

There is no ethical or scientific difference between a “therapeutic” clone and a “reproductive” clone; the terms simply describe their future. That the committee would describe cloning as “not a major additional step” (p171), illustrates the degree to which it sought to disguise the implications by belittling the process.

2. This is a completely meritless recommendation to which no government should agree.

3. We have never agreed with the use of “excess” embryos in a way that knowingly leads to their destruction because it has engendered an attitude that human embryos are to be treated and discarded as a product of science. To expand the available embryos for use is to lose an opportunity to redress this situation. The Lockhart Committee has simply used one bad decision to justify further abuses on the grounds of consistency. It has tried to engineer the rationale for a medical research industry without a conscience.

4. This is a definition of convenience with no scientific merit or authenticity. The proper and accepted definition of the beginning of human life should be insisted upon.

5. There is no justification for this. It makes the embryo into a plaything of scientists.

The Lockhart Committee was comprised of people nominated by each of the state Premiers because they were known to be supporters of cloning, and the Prime Minister selected the chair. There was not even a pretence of balance. The Lockhart proposals are just a bonanza for cloning proponents with no serious consideration for the impact it would have on ethical science, whether or not that means a different position to other countries.

It is only a little over three years ago that every MP in every federal and state house of parliament in Australia (other than the NT) voted against all forms of human cloning. There is no case for moving the line in the sand that was drawn then.

**It is vital that there be a complete analysis of the report by an independent committee of parliament to assess these recommendations from other viewpoints before any legislation is drafted.**

Yours sincerely,  
Dr. Donna Purcell  
**President of Queensland Right to Life.**