

16 October 2006

Brian Harradine

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Mr Humphery,

Submission to **Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into the Legislative responses to Recommendations of the Lockhart Review**

I write as a former senator who has had a longstanding interest in reproductive technology, ethics and policy. Over 20 years ago I introduced the *Human Embryo Experimentation Bill 1985* into the Australian Senate to prohibit destructive experiments with human embryos.

Human embryos have a special status as human beings and deserve our respect and protection. They should not be deliberately destroyed for research or any other reason.

I strongly oppose the recommendations of the Lockhart Committee to allow the cloning of human embryos for research (so-called "somatic cell nuclear transfer"), the deliberate creation of human embryos for destructive research and the creation of human-animal hybrid embryos. I also oppose the Licensing Committee being given the power to make binding rulings on the legislation.

Specifically, I oppose Lockhart recommendations 14-17, 19, 21-27, 42 and 47-53.

In 2002, when embryo research and cloning legislation was debated in the Federal Parliament, some scientists claimed they only wanted access to "spare" human embryos for research and this would be adequate for their research to find cures. They would not need to clone human embryos. Today, very few human embryos licensed for research are for finding therapies, but are instead for testing IVF techniques, testing drugs and other uses.

Some scientists now say they need to clone human embryos for, amongst other things, developing cures but that they would never want to clone human embryos for reproduction. Given cloning pioneer Dr Ian Wilmut said "I do envisage that producing cloned babies would be desirable under certain

circumstances, such as preventing genetic disease" ([Attachment 3](#)), I am concerned about where this is leading.

I have attached a journal article by Dr Neville Cobbe ([Attachment 1](#)) which provides a compelling argument that there is little evidence in animal research that cloning embryos would lead to therapies. Even if this evidence were produced, the need for human eggs raises concerns over the exploitation of women.

In an opinion piece ([Attachment 4](#)) I pointed out that ethicists "... questioned whether it is ethical to ask women to donate their eggs for no personal health gain. Normally it would be an obligation of doctors to advise against a risky operation for no benefit."

I am concerned at the use of camouflage jargon in the debate around the Lockhart Committee recommendations and especially in relation to cloning human embryos. The Lockhart Committee refers to "somatic cell nuclear transfer" (SCNT), which in layman's terms is cloning a human embryo.

The use of such convoluted terms such as SCNT is meant to cloud the debate. An article from *Nature* ([Attachment 5](#)) points out that last year the International Society for Stem Cell Research decided to adopt the term SCNT because "... scientists realised that the word 'cloning' was generating public concern."

I have given more detailed comment on attempts to obscure the debate with semantics in an opinion piece in *The Canberra Times* ([Attachment 4](#)).

Despite the confusing language, there is evidence the Australian public, when fully informed, does not want human embryos cloned. I have attached a copy of a Swinburne University study ([Attachment 2](#)) which found that "there was good evidence to conclude that the Australian public do not feel comfortable with scientists cloning human embryos for research purposes" (page 95) as the majority of the sample (63 per cent) did not like cloning human embryos.

I apologise for the lateness of this submission as I was unaware until Friday that submissions had closed. I would be grateful if the committee would accept this submission. Could you please circulate it to Senators.

Yours faithfully

BRIAN HARRADINE

Attachments

1. Cobbe, N (2006) Why the apparent haste to clone humans? *Journal of Medical Ethics*, Vol. 32, pp 298-302
2. Critchley, C and Turney, L (2004) Understanding Australians' perceptions of controversial scientific research. *Australian Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, Vol. 2(2), pp 82-107
3. Harradine, B (2004) Beware the push for human cloning, *The Age*, 31 July, page 9.
4. Harradine, B (2005) Whatever the cloning lobby says, it's still a human embryo, *The Canberra Times*, 26 May, page 17.
5. Playing the name game. *Nature*, Vol 436, page 2, 7 July 2005