

**St John the Apostle Catholic Community**

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Pages 1
Topic Legislative Responses to recommendations of the Lockhart Review

**SUBMISSION TO SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
ON ISSUES CONCERNING**

• Legislative Responses to recommendations of the reports of the Legislative Review Committee on the Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2002 and Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002 (the Lockhart Review)

* That in undertaking this inquiry the committee may consider any relevant bill or draft bill presented to the President by a Senator when the Senate is not sitting.

I am disturbed by statements in the media which imply that opposition to aspects of stem cell research comes from a religious persuasion, as though this sets it apart from rational debate. The fact that religious positions (and any number of other positions) can be irrational should not blind us to insights that genuine religion can offer us.

I am writing as a parish priest who is a Catholic. The Catholic Church is not against stem cell research. Stem cells can rightly be obtained and used for research in a number of ways: from tissue remaining after a natural miscarriage; from foetal chord blood; from the placenta; from a biopsy taken from an embryo in the womb. Researchers are looking into the possibility of taking adult stem cells and 'growing them backwards to the embryonic stage'. There are areas of debate even in the Church over certain aspects of this complex matter.

What I am opposed to is the creation of fertilised cells for the purpose of harvesting stem cells. To do this is to create human life in order to terminate it for research. The insight that is at the core of my argument is not based on religious belief. It is grounded in scientifically established fact and common sense. We accept the practice of using organs from a human being who has died. We would not accept the termination of life to obtain such organs. Of course in the current debate no one is arguing for the termination of human life once that life is visible to us and we are able to see and appreciate its value. But some are speaking of obtaining cells from human blastocysts especially produced and then destroyed. Common sense and science agree that these organisms are alive and that the life is human. The issue comes down to the value that the community places on a human being at the earliest stages of development.

(Fr) Michael Fallon: parish priest