



3<sup>rd</sup> October 2006

The Committee Secretary  
Community Affairs Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on the legislative responses to recommendations to the Lockhart Report.

SpinalCure Australia (SCA) is an organisation devoted to finding a cure for the paralysis caused by spinal cord injury.

A summary of SCA's position is as follows, complemented with additional information provided as a separate document:

- We are in support of the recommendations of the recent Lockhart Review.
- We believe that the current ban on the use of stem cells through nuclear transfer (SCNT) – does not reflect community sentiment and is not in the best interests of Australia, Australian science, or Australians.
- The diverse range of personal opinions on this issue can only be justly translated into representative policy through an open discussion in Parliament – and a conscience vote.

## **Why?**

### **1. The majority (80%) of the Australian community supports SCNT**

- A Roy Morgan poll conducted on 14/15 June<sup>1</sup> showed that 80% of Australians support embryonic stem cell research with stem cells made by merging an unfertilised egg with a skin cell (SCNT), where no fertilisation with sperm takes place.
- A separate ACNielsen poll taken for *The Age* on 7/9 September 2006 found that 62 per cent of respondents were in favour of legislation allowing the cloning of stem cells for medical research.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2006/4036/](http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2006/4036/)

**2. SCNT is not cloning, and Australia already allows research like this for infertility purposes**

- o Research is already allowed under licence in Australia on embryonic stem cells from fertilised eggs excess to those required for use in IVF treatments
- o SCNT involves creating embryonic stem cells using unfertilized eggs, but not sperm. The advantage of cells produced in this manner is that they are genetically identical to potential recipients, and hence will not be rejected when transplanted.
- o This type of embryo is not intended to be implanted, so the production and destruction of such an embryo is not dissimilar to the production and destruction of excess IVF embryos, which is permitted by legislation and accepted by society
- o Therefore denying SCNT but allowing IVF research implicitly values infertility treatment more than potential cures to chronic diseases

**3. Maintaining a ban will see Australia fall further behind international researchers and we will lose more of our best scientific brains overseas.**

- o Australia has been a leader in stem cell research. Earlier this year we lost our top human embryonic stem cell scientist, A/Professor Martin Pera, to California. Last month we lost one of our top adult stem cell scientists, A/Professor Paul Simmons, to Texas. This will continue.
- o We will also be prevented from sharing in the international collaborations, research knowledge, and intellectual property that will accompany this science.

**4. Over 500,000 Australians with debilitating diseases and conditions will need to look overseas for hope for a cure**

- o One person dies from Motor Neurone Disease in Australia every day.
- o One person suffers a severe spinal cord injury every day.
- o Over 140,000 Australian children and adults have type 1 diabetes.
- o One person in 100 over the age of 60 will develop Alzheimers.
- o 100,000 people in Australia have Parkinson's Disease.
- o Stem cell research holds hope for all of these conditions and many more.

We are happy to expand on the material provided either by submission or in person.

Yours sincerely,



**Bob Turner**  
Chief Executive Officer  
**SPINALCURE AUSTRALIA**