

Submission to the Senate Community Affairs
Committee on Legislative Responses to
recommendations of the Lockhart Review
In particular the bill sponsored by Senator Kay
Patterson, namely;

**Prohibition of Human Cloning for Reproduction
and the Regulation of Human Embryo Research
Amendment Bill 2006**

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In 2002, the federal parliament voted to allow stem cell research using “excess” human embryos, leftover from I.V.F. procedures.

At the same time the parliament overwhelmingly voted against the cloning – through somatic cell nuclear transfer – of human embryos to be used for the extraction of stem cells and then discarded.

This is commonly referred to as therapeutic cloning.

At the time of the debate on this measure, Senator Kay Patterson stated, “***I believe strongly that it is wrong to create human embryos solely for research. It is not morally permissible to develop an embryo with the intent of truncating it at an early stage for the benefit of another human being.***”

Having recognised the moral imperative of opposing cloning of human embryos, it is therefore hard to understand why Senator Patterson has taken this quantum leap and is now sponsoring legislation that not only permits cloning embryos but also a number of totally unethical and unacceptable measures.

That legislation of this nature, which would once have been seen as unethical is now being seriously contemplated by our national parliament is not surprising given the steady erosion of the principles attaching to the treatment of human embryos in laboratories.

Over the past 25 years or so we have seen a trail of broken promises on the part of those medical scientists involved in embryonic research. For example, the public were once promised no freezing of embryos, no experimentation with embryos, no selection and discarding of embryos etc.

Now today we stand on the threshold of giving assent to measures of which Nazi scientists would have been delighted to have access to.

The principle at stake here is whether we sanction the manufacturing of a certain class of human embryos to be used for the benefit of others.

This concept either part of past history e.g. slavery, Nazi medical experiments on prison camp inmates, or abuses of contemporary times such as children in poor countries used as sex slaves, or Chinese executed prisoners used as organ donors, is one which is generally anathema to Australian society.

Yet we are preparing to accept that very small human beings can be made, used and discarded, simply because they are tiny, but human nevertheless they be!

What are some of the standout excesses of this legislation?

Human embryos will be able to be cloned using donor eggs which have to be available in abundance, stem cells will be removed from them and they will then be discarded.

Because of the difficulty that will present in maintaining a good supply of donor eggs i.e. women's eggs, the legislation allows animal eggs to be fertilised with human sperm to create hybrid embryos to be used in research.

Hybrid embryos – allowed for up to 14 days (does not specify whether in a woman's body or in the laboratory).

A person can collect an embryo from a women's body provided that the intent is not to collect a viable human embryo (i.e. destruction of a human embryo for research or for unethical medical treatment is allowed).

A human embryo can be developed outside the body of a woman for up to 14 days.

Trade in embryos – allowed provided that payment is not beyond reasonable expenses incurred by the supply of the embryo. Trade in human sperm and eggs are also allowed under the same clause. The only caveat given is that trade must not occur for "prohibited embryos" (a term which only applies for trade and not for production of embryos), such as animal-human hybrids, human embryos whose purpose is not for reproduction, or embryos developed for more than 14 days. Please Note: These "prohibited embryos" can still be made in Australian laboratories but cannot be sold overseas or imported, and so are not really prohibited at all.

Creating embryos from more than two (2) people.

The final insult to injury is surely the section of the bill which will allow the creation of human embryos using cells from a human foetus, to produce human embryos for research!

In other words an aborted baby will become a mother, posthumously, even if only for a short time!

Such regulations reduce human life to a "thing" that may be created, destroyed, bought, sold or experimented upon like a laboratory animal.

We have certainly reached a new low in respect for human life and hope you can help us to oppose this dangerous and destructive legislation.