

Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee

***Inquiry into the Legislative responses to Recommendations of the  
Lockhart Review***

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October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2006

## **Introduction**

To reach ethically valid conclusions in matters as sensitive and divisive as the definition and status of the human individual embryo, and the beginning of the life of the individual human person, it is not appropriate to rely solely on popular surveys of the general population. Even among ethicists there is great confusion and disagreement about these matters.

A recent excellent article<sup>1</sup> wrests clarity out of confusion, leaving no doubt that the *individual* human embryo begins life at fecundation and not at 14 days when the primitive streak appears. The article enumerates the *manipulations* that much of present day bioethics performs on the embryo; reducing it from the very beginning of its development, from an individual system to a mere clump of cells, the so-called *pre-embryo*.

**The Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2002** became law in Federal Parliament in 2002: it prohibits the creation of human embryos in order to experiment on them. At the same time, **Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002** allowed some experiments on “excess” embryos from IVF procedures prior to April 2002, provided the permission of the parents was obtained. Similar laws were enacted in all states and the ACT. A review of both these Acts was conducted under the chairmanship of Justice Lockhart and the **Lockhart Report** was presented in 2005.

### **THE PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING FOR REPRODUCTION AND THE REGULATION OF HUMAN EMBRYO RESEARCH AMENDMENT BILL 2006**

- makes a false distinction between reproductive cloning and therapeutic cloning as if the use to which the embryo is put is of greater value than *what the embryo is, a unique human individual*.
- recommends the prohibition of “reproductive” cloning as ethically unacceptable
- argues that “*therapeutic*” cloning is permissible because it ‘*suggests the possibility*’ of finding cures for human diseases and traumas.
- then justifies almost every possible experimentation on the individual human embryo in the name of “**therapeutic**” cloning.
- then proceeds to argue that the embryo may be destroyed in the name of scientific progress

“*Therapeutic*” cloning has as its aim the creation of individual human life for the express purpose of destroying it to obtain embryonic stem cells and for research such as drug testing.

### **Excess Embryos from ART**

Another adjective used to justify destruction of the embryo is “excess”, as if that adjective somehow lowers the ethical barrier to experimentation. The definition of “excess” embryos are “those no longer needed to achieve pregnancy” or “the woman for whom the embryo was created declaring in writing that the embryo is an excess ART embryo”. It is as if embryos no longer required by the parents lose their value as unique human individuals.

## Hybrid and Chimeric embryos

The Bill goes further in its devaluing of the individual human embryo by approving the creation of human embryos for the purpose of research and the testing of drugs, as well as other manipulations resulting in hybrid embryos and chimeric embryos.

*Hybrid embryo* means

- a) an embryo created by the fertilisation of a human egg by animal sperm; or
- b) an embryo created by the fertilisation of an animal egg by human sperm; or
- c) a human egg into which the nucleus of an animal cell has been introduced; or
- d) an animal egg into which the nucleus of a human cell has been introduced; or
- e) a thing declared by the regulations to be a hybrid embryo.

*Chimeric embryo* means

- a) a human embryo into which a cell, or any component part of a cell has been introduced
- b) a thing declared by the regulations to be a chimeric embryo

**N.B. All such procedures were outlawed by the 2002 legislation and should remain so.**

## Adult stem cell research

Great success has been achieved with adult stem cells, an area of research that does not cross any ethical barriers. I suggest research funds be directed to that end.

Success stories about adult stem cell treatments are coming in so fast that LifeSiteNews.com, one of the few newswire services to follow the issue closely, is having trouble keeping up. While many disease research organizations continue to promote the use of living embryonic human beings for experimentation, the only successful treatments, to date, have all come from the use of adult stem cells.

## Conclusion

The crucial ethical positions which must be respected are:

- ***The life of an individual human being begins at the fertilisation of a human egg by human sperm or by the production of a human embryo clone.***
- **There is neither philosophical nor biological basis for considering the human individual embryo prior to 14 days as a pre-embryo nobody, with no value as a human individual.**
- **The use to which a human individual embryo is put can never be of greater value than what it is, a unique human individual that may not be used for destructive experimentation.**

- *The production of hybrid and chimeric embryos is abhorrent.*

I ask the Federal Government to reject any destructive experimentation on the human embryo from its very beginning, and also to express its abhorrence at the suggestion of the Lockhart Committee that chimeric and hybrid embryos be produced for the purpose of study and experimentation.

**In summary, please reject any alteration to the current Federal Legislation.**

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<sup>1</sup> Gianni Bozzato, *Riduzione "laica" dell'embrione-individuo*, Anthropotes, Lateran University Press, 05/XXI/I