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Church & Nation Committee.

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Wednesday October 4th, 2006.

**To the members of the Community Affairs Standing Committee of the
Federal Senate;**

Dear members.

**I make the following submission to this enquiry into cloning on behalf of
the Federal Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.**

**This Committee is charged, by the Federal Assembly, to investigate
issues of social ethics and the practical outworking of Christian values
on issues of social policy.**

**As a committee, we do speak in a general way to reflect the views of
practicing Presbyterians in Australia. We deliberately avoid making
“statements” and/or “submissions” on issues where members of our
denomination could be expected to have significantly varying viewpoints.
Hence the following should be seen as broadly representative of the
views of members of this denomination.**

The Committee is concerned about two specific recommendations of the Lockhart Committee's Review which are being further proposed in both Sen. Patterson's and Sen. De Spojja's Bills, concerning the loosening of restrictions on both embryo research and so-called "therapeutic" cloning. It believes that such loosening of current standards would present serious dilemmas for the future direction of medical research. We see that

the proposals mooted are a direct violation of the Christian ethical presupposition that individual human life (albeit with only potential independence) begins at conception. Therefore, that the 'creation' of viable human embryos in test-tubes, without reference to human parents, is morally and legally indefensible and will lead into an ethical morass.

The Committee is vigorously in favour of furthering adult stem-cell research as it appears to offer more immediate prospects of medical break-throughs in known cases and offer new potential in diseases not yet addressed.

Such research avoids the moral dilemmas of 'farming' embryos, however generated, and is showing practical benefits already. The researchers at Griffith University in Queensland are to be congratulated and given more support!

Because we believe that life begins at conception, to limit research to embryos prior to 14 days' development is a meaningless moral gesture [recommendations 23 & 24]. It appears to us that, sooner or later, (as with the practice in foetal terminations) the term of accepted experimentation will be extended – there being no objective moral grounds upon which to refuse its extension.

The possibility of the introduction of genetic substances from more than two human donors, intended to progress the development of one single embryo is leading research into what we see as monstrous, manipulation and could lead to unforeseen complications!

The committee fully supports some proposals from the Review; for example, the continued ban on reproductive cloning and those parts of the recommendations that prescribe appropriate penalties for the misuse of the new technologies.

The Committee is distressed to see both in Senator Patterson's proposed Bill and in Senator Stott De Spoja's, the provision for human-animal – or animal-human hybridisation!

We affirm that the fundamental building-blocks of life, human sperm and eggs, must be respectfully and intentionally used to enrich and enhance life.

We note that no one is claiming that immediate benefit will come from these controversial proposals. On the contrary, the publicity is aimed at shaming our leaders into allowing scientists to have a free rein as to THEIR determined course.

This Committee is on record as asking for prudent restraint of what we believe to be unwise and vigorous support for what we see as the exciting prospects of adult stem-cell research.