



SUBMISSION

to the
SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Inquiry into the Legislative Responses to
Recommendations of the Lockhart Review

by
**THE FAMILY COUNCIL OF
QUEENSLAND, INC.**

4 October, 2006

The Family Council of Queensland, Inc. is a non-profit, non-denominational non-party political association of churches and pro-family organisations, including the Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, the Australian Family Association, Drug-ARM, the Festival of Light and Endeavour Forum – thus representing the views of tens of thousands of Queensland families. Our contact details are as follows: President, Mr Alan Baker, phone 07 3221 1122; PO Box 2020, Mansfield BC 4122; email alanbaker@retirewell.com.au

WHY THE LOCKHART REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS ON HUMAN CLONING SHOULD BE REJECTED

The key recommendation of the Lockhart Review was that “human somatic cell nuclear transfer should be permitted, under licence, to create and use human embryo clones for research, training and clinical application, including the production of human embryonic stem cells.”

The Senate should reject this recommendation (and the private member’s bills attempting to legislate it) for the following reasons:

- Half the members of the Lockhart Committee (Professors Kerridge, Skene and Schofield) were already on the record as supporters of cloning before they were appointed. **The committee was stacked and was not at all representative of community views.**
- Given that the South Korean cloning breakthrough on which the Lockhart Committee relied - the **scientific basis of its recommendations** - was **shown to be fraudulent** just four days after the Lockhart Report was released late last year, the Committee, if it had any integrity, should have withdrawn its recommendations and pulped its report.
- The Lockhart Committee’s terms of reference tasked it with reviewing the relevant Acts “in light of changes in scientific or community understanding or standards since 2002.” Given that there has been no significant scientific progress (i.e. no human clones or embryonic stem cells there from have ever been created – see mpconsulting’s independent report to Cabinet in June at www.dpmc.gov.au/publications/docs/art_report.rtf) and **no change in community standards** in the past four years (recent valid independent opinion polls show that the majority of Australians oppose cloning of human embryos – see endnote), the Lockhart Committee exceeded its brief in recommending changes to the law. It is outrageous that this biased committee came to the conclusion that there is no single Australian community but “many communities” and that “therefore any scientific exploration should be permitted provided there were not strong arguments against it from all groups, including those who discounted the moral significance of the life of the human embryo.” In other words, unless there was unanimous opposition to cloning, it should be legalised. How intellectually dishonest is that position?

- Cloning (or SCNT) would create a living human embryo solely for destructive research. This is ethically wrong. **We must not create one life in order to destroy it for the supposed benefit of another life.**
- Let there be no mistake. Although no fertilisation using sperm takes place in the cloning process and the cloned entity would be a near-identical twin of the donor, this does not change the fact that what would be created by cloning would be a **human embryo**, a member of the human family which would have all the genetic material and power to direct its own growth and development as **a living human being**. Once formed, only nutrition, oxygen, shelter and time are needed for a human embryo to become a fetus, and infant, a child and eventually an adult. There is no such thing as potential human life, only human life with potential.
- **Nothing has changed since 2002 when Federal Parliament unanimously voted to ban all forms of cloning.** How can something that was so wrong then become right just four years later? How can Senator Patterson (the author of the main private member's bill which this committee is examining) justify her moral back flip? She told the Senate four years ago: "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."
- **If we cross this moral "line in the sand", what will stop us sliding further down the slippery slope towards acceptance of cloned fetus farming for organ transplants?** With scientific "progress" overseas will come pressure to extend the proposed 14 day limit before cloned embryos in the laboratory have to be destroyed for their stem cells. Scientists will want to grow cloned embryos in artificial wombs in the laboratory (a process known as ectogenesis) until say 12 weeks when the organs are fully developed. Professor Julian Savulescu, of Oxford and Melbourne Universities, published a paper in the Journal of Medical Ethics in April 1999 entitled *Should we clone human beings? Cloning as a source of tissue for transplantation*. In its abstract, he stated: "It is not merely morally permissible but morally required that we employ cloning to produce... fetuses for the sake of providing... organs for therapy, followed by abortion of the...fetus." Robert P. George, Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University and a member of the US President's Council on Bioethics, wrote in *The Weekly Standard* in March 2005: "Based on the literature I have read and the evasive answers given by spokesmen for the biotechnology industry at meetings of the President's Council on Bioethics, I fear that the long-term goal is indeed to create an industry in harvesting late embryonic and fetal body parts for use in regenerative medicine and organ transplantation."

- **The ethically innocent field of adult stem cell research is far more likely to deliver the cures we all hope for**, given that more than 70 medical conditions are currently being treated in humans using adult stem cells (see www.stemcellresearch.org/facts/treatments.htm) – whereas there have been no human trials with embryonic stem cells because they are not safe, causing tumors in animals. Professor Bob Williamson of the Australian Academy of Science, a supporter of research cloning, admitted in an opinion piece in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 3 January 2006: “Nuclear transfer [cloning] is *not* of importance to give cells to treat patients; these are far more likely to come from so-called ‘adult stem cells’.” And Professor Alan Trounson of the Australian Stem Cell Centre said in *The Age* on 5 June 2005: “I don’t call it therapeutic cloning because *it’s not about cells for therapy* [emphasis added]. This is about cells that give us an opportunity to discover what causes a disease and whether we can interfere with that. These cells should only be used for research.” However, **adult stem cells already can do everything which scientists hope embryonic stem cells from cloned embryos would be able to do**. Adult stem cells are multipotent, meaning they can be turned into new brain cells, liver cells, heart cells, kidney cells, muscle cells etc. They are genetically stable and do not form tumors like embryonic stem cells are prone to do. Because they are “patient-specific”, they can be used for direct cell therapy to repair damaged tissue without any rejection problems. Adult stem cells also can be “disease-specific”, so they can be used as a tool for exploring the disease process and testing drugs against that disease. Griffith University in Brisbane is a world leader in this research, having demonstrated how to obtain adult stem cells easily from the nostrils of patients. Professor Alan Mackay-Sim’s team at Griffith is already using “disease-specific” adult stem cell lines from more than 40 patients for research into Parkinson’s, motor neuron disease, epilepsy, schizophrenia etc and has commenced a world-first Phase 1 human clinical trial into spinal cord regeneration.
- Cloning also is unacceptable because it requires hundreds of eggs per clone and thus would lead to the **commercialisation of women’s ovaries**, as women will not be prepared to take the health risks inherent in super ovulation drugs without some payment or inducement. It stands to reason that women in lower socio-economic groups would be exploited. The alternative is, as the Lockhart Report recommended and Senator Patterson’s bill allows, using animal eggs – creating **animal-human hybrids** – which is abhorrent. A particularly repulsive aspect of Senator Patterson’s bill is allowing the use of precursor cells from aborted fetuses. In other words, **aborted baby girls could become mothers of human embryos that will themselves be killed for research**. This would be truly beyond the pale!

- From a pro-family perspective, human cloning – whether reproductive or so-called “therapeutic” - is totally unethical. The national spokesperson for Do No Harm: Australians for Ethical Stem Cell Research, Dr David van Gend, put it best in an article in *Human Life Review* in 2001, in which he stated: “The first of **a race of laboratory human beings** [is soon to be] created, the first absolute orphan. The cloned embryo, unlike its IVF cousin, has no mother or father, and is intended for destruction. It is the [near] identical twin of its tissue donor, which might be a living person or a dead person, or even just a fragment of anonymous human tissue from a hospital freezer. The clone [will be] nobody’s child. Human kinship is grotesquely violated; the new Homo experimentus is outside of human belonging, and its creation as an excluded, exploited human existence is the moral heart of this matter.”

CONCLUSION

Cloning is morally wrong and unnecessary, impractical and irrelevant. Limited government funding for medical research should go to treatments on humans using adult stem cells to obtain cures for diseases more quickly. We urge this committee and the Senate to reject the private member’s bills seeking to implement the Lockhart recommendations.

####

ENDNOTE

The most recent in-depth research into public attitudes to human cloning was carried out by Sexton Marketing Group for the Southern Cross Bioethics Institute in January 2006 through a national telephone poll of 1200 people.

It found that only 29% of respondents support the cloning of human embryos as a source of stem cells while 51% opposed the cloning of human embryos for stem cells. This increased to 55% when it was clarified with respondents that in these embryos are destroyed in the process of obtaining stem cells from them. (43% of respondents were not previously aware of this fact.)

Earlier [research](#) conducted by Swinburne University found that:

“Almost 30% of the sample was not at all comfortable with using cloned embryos, and the majority of the sample (63.4%) scored under the mid point (i.e. 5). Given this, and that the mean score for cloning was well below five and the modal response was zero (see Table 1), there **was good evidence to conclude that the Australian public do not feel comfortable with scientists cloning human embryos for research purposes.**” Although this research was published in 2004 it is not referred to at all in the Lockhart Report.

The [Morgan Poll](#) published on 21 June 2006 told respondents:

Scientists can now make embryonic stem cells for medical research by merging an unfertilised egg with a skin cell. In this case, no fertilisation takes place and there is no merger of the egg and sperm.

Respondents were then asked:

Knowing this, do you favor or oppose embryonic stem cell research?

Eighty percent responded that they favored embryonic stem cell research.

This poll is invalid, as the information given to respondents was false. No scientist has yet made an embryonic stem cell from a cloned embryo. It is also gave a misleading description of cloning. Many lay people would not have understood from this description that this process would still form a living human embryo which would then be destroyed by the extraction of stem cells.