

Submission on the Inquiry into the Legislative responses to Recommendations of the Lockhart Review

October 2006

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This submission will be brief. Several main considerations are:

Nothing has really changed since the Lockhart report came out in 2002. Creating an embryo simply to destroy it for a possible cure for someone else still remains unethical. Embryonic stem cell research still has produced no human cures nor therapies. Pharmaceutical companies still have less than ideal motives for getting access to embryo research: drug testing, and so on. Big Biotech still is hyping the supposed benefits of embryo research.

The only thing that has changed over the past four years are the number of human therapies, cures and breakthroughs coming from adult stem cells.

Despite many claims to the contrary, the methods used to create a cloned embryo for so-called therapeutic cloning (via Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer) is the same method that was used on Dolly the sheep and is the same method would be used in possible reproductive cloning for humans.

The best way to ensure that reproductive cloning never takes place is to nip it in the bud. That means not allowing human cloning in order to create embryos with which to extract stem cells from, or to do other research. Both are using the same process, and both are ethically wrong.

An embryo is a full member of the human race, and is entitled to all the protections that any other human being is entitled to. The Family Council of Victoria opposes any attempts to redefine what an embryo is (eg., talking about pre-embryos and the like).

Moreover, it is a common feature of medical ethics to disallow research or activity where the patient is not able to give consent. Obviously the embryo is not in a position to do that.

While we are not happy with every feature of the original 2002 report, we see no need to go beyond it, or alter it, as the Patterson and Stott-Despoja bills would do.

Human life is too valuable to be tampered with, and the possible future cures need to be balanced against the unethical taking of a real human life in the present. It is always wrong to take the life of one person, for the good of another, certainly without the permission or consent of the former.

That is simply a utilitarian argument, one that can be further extended. Why not, for example, kill prisoners in order to use their organs for the benefit of another (a practice that seems to be taking place in China)?

In sum, we must not cross the line of allowing state-sponsored taking of life in this area. Human cloning of all types must always be opposed. Ethical alternatives like adult stem cell therapy must be encouraged.