



The Australian Family Association (NSW)

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SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE LEGISLATIVE RESPONSES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LOCKHART REVIEW

The Lockhart Review Committee received over a thousand letters most of which professed the view that citizens in our country do not want cloning of any kind introduced in Australia. However the Committee sanctioned various research projects which our politicians up until now have been reluctant to approve.

The Australian Family Association (AFA) DOES NOT APPROVE of ANY embryo stem cell research whether the embryos are the result of 'excess' ART procedures, discarded disabled embryos or so called 'therapeutically' cloned embryos.

The AFA wishes to comment on the following points from the Lockhart Review Committee Recommendations:

AN EMBRYO IS STILL AN EMBRYO – HOW IT IS FORMED IS IRRELEVANT

While the Review proposes an on-going ban on Reproductive cloning (ie bringing the cloned embryo to birth), so called 'Therapeutic' cloning (experimenting upon and ultimately destroying the cloned embryo) is to be allowed with guidelines and a licensing system.

We submit that *ANY form of cloning is wrong* whether for reproduction or for research purposes. There is no distinction between the various forms of cloning, as the method of producing an embryo is irrelevant.

People are being misled into thinking that reproductive and therapeutic cloning are two different procedures. They are not! The only difference between the two procedures is the destination of the embryo. In so called 'therapeutic' cloning the embryo is destined to be used as laboratory fodder and is destroyed before 14 days gestation; in reproductive cloning the embryo is destined to be implanted and grown to birth. Either way an embryo capable of impregnating a woman and growing into a baby is produced.

The result of cloning is still a human life with exactly the same potential for full development as that of an embryo created by fertilising an ovum with sperm and as such should be treated with respect. There is no justification for

recommending that embryos (cloned or otherwise) be created just to be destroyed even for the purported benefit of others.

NO CURES FROM EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS

People are being led to believe that while reproductive cloning will be banned forever, scientists need to clone embryos so that they can harvest embryonic stem cells (ESCs) for vital research which they say will cure many diseases.

Do not believe this. So far, *NOT ONE* cure or treatment has been successful using ESCs, as opposed to the very encouraging track record of adult stem cells (ASCs) – why not support the successful treatments using ASCs if that is truly what is motivating the proposed encouragement of cloning research.

Perhaps however, the real motivation for allowing research on ESCs could be that researchers wish to work with ESCs to test drugs and prepare stem cell lines for sale. The fact that ESCs have a real potential to form tumours seems to have escaped notice. The Australian Family Association finds it offensive that patients are being told that cures using ESCs are very close to reality and all that is needed is access to enough ESCs and many diseases will be eliminated. Patients are being conned by scientists with this information.

WOMEN FOR EGG FARMING – WOULD YOU SUBJECT YOUR WIFE OR DAUGHTER TO IT?

Cloning and embryo stem cell research requires large quantities of ova (eggs). These ova can be obtained by hyper-stimulation of women's ovaries. This procedure is painful and dangerous with serious side-effects and possible loss of fertility. No woman should risk her health for the sake of the commercial interests of science.

The other source of eggs is to acquire them from animals.

The Lockhart Review Committee in Recommendation 24 suggests using hybrid embryos made from (a) an embryo created by the fertilisation of a human egg by animal sperm; (b) an embryo created by the fertilisation of an animal egg by human sperm; (c) an animal egg into which the nucleus of a human cell has been introduced. Senator Natasha Stott-Despoja's Bill goes further than this. She proposes the legal creation of chimeric embryos (an embryo made of genetic material from an assortment of human and animal sources).

Senator Patterson's Bill also allows scientists to create animal-human hybrid embryos, it allows scientists to create human embryos with more than two genetic parents, and it allows scientists to create human embryos where one of the parents is an aborted human foetus.

We are living in a time where some scientists seem to disregard the ethical boundaries of their work, and have the attitude that 'if it is possible, let's try it' without considering the collateral damage caused by their actions.

MORE FUNDS FOR ADULT STEM CELL RESEARCH - FORGET EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS

The Lockhart Review recommends the promotion of a stem cell bank where many stem cell lines could be readily accessible. Since ESC research has not shown realistic promise of benefits to patients with diseases surely Australia should instead be promoting and financing research where pleasing results actually exist – namely in the science of Adult Stem Cells.

The point is that Embryonic Stem Cells are NOT NEEDED for research.

EUGENICS

In recommendation 22, the Lockhart Review suggests that fresh ART embryos diagnosed as unsuitable for implantation be permitted to be used, under licence, for research, training and improvements in clinical practice. The Australian Family Association understands that this would promote the use of potentially disabled embryos and 'poorer' embryos for research because, in the eyes of the Lockhart Committee, they have no value as human beings. This would promote preselection for the 'perfect' human and permit experimentation on so called 'lesser' beings. Following this recommendation would clearly open up the practice of eugenics, and should be rejected.

LOCKHART COMMITTEE IMPARTIAL AND DIS-INTERESTED? DON'T BE FOOLED!

In spite of the Lockhart Review members being promoted as impartial, there is significant evidence that several members actively promoted overturning the ban on the creation of ESCs long before they were selected to serve on the Review. Surely this is conflict of interest and their Recommendations should be seriously questioned.

MP's MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE IN 2002 – KEEP IT THAT WAY.

Finally, there has not been ANY change in technology (except in the advancement of ASCs) to warrant the implementation of the Lockhart Review recommendations, nor the passing of the Bills sponsored by Senator Natasha Stott-Despoja or Senator Kay Patterson. The Australian Family Association does not see a need to change the legislation enacted in 2002 and has not been given any credible reason for doing so by either the Lockhart Review, Senator Stott-Despoja or Senator Kay Patterson.

The Australian Family Association therefore recommends that the provisions of the *Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2002* and the *Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002* be retained.

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