

**Submission to
Senate Community Affairs Committee**

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

Relating to cloning and embryo stem cell research
From

**Salt Shakers
Christian Ethics Group**

Salt Shakers is a national organisation which distributes a monthly journal and has an email distribution service on Christian ethics issues.

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Introduction

This submission addresses the terms of reference of the Inquiry, the recommendations of the Lockhart Review, the two bills by Senators Stott Despoja and Senator Patterson and related matters of concern. We do this briefly by considering the ethics of cloning itself and some of the proposals suggested by the Lockhart Committee and the two proposed Bills.

Since the two bills were debated in the federal Parliament in 2002, nothing has changed. The bill relating to cloning, the *Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2002* had unanimous support from all Senators and Members to ban all forms of cloning.

The *Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002* allowed the use of already created embryos that were 'left-over' from IVF procedures. The Bill stipulated that approval needed to be obtained from the owners of the embryos.

In 2002 Salt Shakers opposed the use of any embryos for stem cell research. Primarily that is because all embryos are living human beings from the moment of conception (or in the case of cloning from the time of 'creation').

Our submission to the Lockhart Committee re-iterated that position.

We maintain that position. Since the subject matter of this Inquiry and these Bills is on the creation of embryos and forms of cloning, we state that we oppose the use of any cloned embryos for any reason – research, 'therapeutic' use in attempting to find 'cures' for disease and the testing of drugs and related matters.

The Report on the Lockhart Review that was prepared by independent consultants, mpconsulting, establishes that NOTHING has changed since 2002 and that Australia should not change its mind and proceed with any form of cloning.

Recommendation:

Salt Shakers asks the Senate Community Affairs Committee to recommend that the Lockhart Committee recommendations and the associated Bills by Senator Stott Despoja and Senator Patterson on cloning be rejected – and that no further developments in embryos stem cell research or cloning be allowed in Australia.

This Submission briefly outlines our reasons for not allowing cloning. In this we will refer to some of the proposals made by the Lockhart Committee and the proposed legislation. Other groups and individuals who oppose the use of cloning but have a particular expertise in scientific matters will deal with the intricacies of the Review and the proposed legislation in much more detail.

We focus on two aspects as to why cloning is wrong and why cloning is not needed.

1 Cloning is morally wrong

Cloning creates a living embryo

Regardless of whether the embryo is created by the fertilisation of an egg by a sperm OR by SNCT – the removal of genetic material from a donor egg and replacing it with material from the person - an embryo is still created.

The embryo is a living human

From the moment of conception the embryo is a living human. Regardless of how the human embryo is formed this still applies.

Just because they are little does not mean they are less human. An embryo ONLY needs food and shelter and time to be a fully developed human outside the womb!

No woman I know has ever said she is 'expecting a fetus'! We ALL know it is a baby from the time of conception.

Even the Lockhart Committee acknowledged that the resultant embryo is a human embryo: On Page 170, the Lockhart Review notes:

The Committee agreed that human embryo clones are human embryos and that, given the right environment for development, could develop into a human being. Furthermore, if such an embryo were implanted into the body of a woman to achieve a pregnancy, this entity would certainly have the same status as any other human embryo, and were this pregnancy to result in a live birth, that child would enjoy the same rights and protection as any other child.

The sheep Dolly was created in this way. This sheep embryo, formed by cloning or SCNT, was implanted into the mother and Dolly was born – so in animals such a technique does work. The resulting sheep, Dolly, was shown to age prematurely – showing that the technique itself is FLAWED.

However despite a lot of theorising the technique has not been done in humans. The Lockhart Review itself was based on the Korean experiments which have since proved to be FALSE.

Since the Lockhart Review was based on fraudulent claims the whole report should be scrapped, as should any Bills enacting the Committee's recommendations (ie the bills of both Sen Stott Despoja and Sen Patterson.)

Nothing has changed since 2002

Since the *Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2002* was passed in 2002, NOTHING has changed. There have been no new developments.

The process is still unethical.

The definition of a embryo in the *Prohibition of Human Cloning Act 2002* includes embryos made "by any means other than by the fertilisation of a human egg by human sperm". The Act said that the cloning techniques (SCNT) was one means by which such an embryo might be formed and then banned such techniques.

This was agreed to unanimously by ALL MPs and Senators.

These techniques should CONTINUE to be banned.

Destroying a human life is morally wrong

Life starts at conception. An embryo is a living human being, no matter how it is formed. Creating a human embryo *for the purpose of destroying it* is morally wrong.

As a Christian organisation, we hold the belief that the sanctity of life is very important. The psalmist says "For you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalms 139: 13-14.

We cannot ethically tamper with life, with creating it or then destroying it.

Obtaining eggs

The question of obtaining the hundreds of 'eggs' needed for cloning is a moral dilemma. To obtain eggs from women is an invasive procedure requiring large doses of drugs. This is an unacceptable proposal and involves the exploitation of women.

This will not provide adequate eggs for researchers - hence the consideration of more macabre means.... By both the Lockhart Committee and the proposed legislation.

Other forms of embryos

- Animal-human hybrid

Many of the proposals for the type of research that might be allowed under the Lockhart Committee and Senator Patterson's (and Sen Stott Despoja's) Bill, are unethical.

Allowing the creation of animal-human hybrids, either by use of a sperm with an animal egg or by cloning /SCNT, is totally unacceptable.

The human race is totally distinct from animals – we are not just another animal and should not be mixed with animal material. The long-term consequences of mixing animal and human material are totally unknown. Even if the scientists claim that this will leave no animal material in the embryo, traces of animal material remain.

Australia's Chief Scientist Jim Peacock, has said that we should NOT go down the path of allowing the creation of animal-human hybrids.

Chief scientist backs animal egg ban, *The Australian*, September 14, 2006

- Aborted babies

The range of suggested techniques proposed by the Lockhart Committee, and included in the proposed legislation as in Senator Patterson's Bill at Section 15, is breathtaking in its disregard for any ethical foundation or morality.

The Committee says:

“Similarly, creation of human embryos using the genetic material from more than two people, including heritable alterations to the genome or using precursor cells from a human embryo or fetus, should also all be permitted”

The thought that an embryo could be created for any purpose, using MORE than two people is abhorrent.

The use of cells from an aborted baby to create embryos is equally abhorrent. The concept of having such interference with humanity is unconscionable, despite what possible benefits are held out.

The aborted baby girl could be the mother of a human embryo – and that embryo could then be killed.

Perhaps we are fortunate that although the Lockhart Committee CONSIDERED the use of donated eggs/ovaries from DEAD women, they did not actually recommend that!

However, it should serve as a warning to us all that once we start down such a path it becomes a very 'slippery' path indeed. Just look at how far we have slipped in these past four years....

The fact is... as the next section shows, there are no results from using any form of embryonic stem cells....

2. Cloning is unnecessary

Adult stem cells provide cures and treatments

There are already 72 cures or treatments available using ethically–obtained stem cells from ‘adult sources, including bone marrow, blood, umbilical cords etc.

See www.stemcellresearch.org

Treatments using adult stem cells, because they use the patients OWN stem cells do not have rejection problems.

In Australia, we have world class researchers already using adult stem cells for cures, including Professor Mackay-Sim.

We need to be funding such research, rather than putting limited resources into unethical and dangerous processes.

No treatments using embryo stem cells

There are NO treatments or cures using embryo stem cells. Attempted treatments using embryo stem cells have resulted in tumours and rejection and lead to genetic problems.

CONCLUSION

Just four years ago all MPs and Senators rejected the notion of any form of cloning.

Senator Patterson said “I believe strongly that it is wrong to create human embryos solely for research” and “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”.

In 2002 Senator Stott Despoja said "There is a strong argument that 'therapeutic cloning' is misleading as a term because it manifestly is not therapeutic for the particular embryo that is destroyed in the process of deriving stem cells."

Nothing has changed.

The science hasn't changed.

The ethics certainly haven't changed.

Cloning of any kind is still morally wrong.

Advances in adult stem research, giving cures and treatments, provides the hope for the future.

Salt Shakers urges the Senate Community Affairs Committee to reject the recommendations of the Lockhart Review and specifically to reject all the proposals in the Bills presented by Senators Stott Despoja and Patterson.