

April 18th 2007

**The Hon
Minister for**

Dear ...

Concerning Cloning – why it is wrong, and why it is unnecessary

As a family doctor and university lecturer in the palliation of advanced disease, I know how desperate patients can be for 'miracle cures'. They will grasp at anything. MPs considering the question of cloning have to deal with the same 'desperate hope' from patient advocacy groups.

But the point of this 'conscience' debate is that, even if there were unique gains to be had from cloning embryos (which appears increasingly unlikely), we would still have to reject cloning on ethical grounds.

Because even sincere empathy for those with disabilities cannot justify the inherently unethical practice of cloning: the creation of living human embryos – identical to any created by IVF or naturally - *with the sole intention of using them in research.*

Again and again in the Federal debate, this biological fact (that cloning creates a living human embryo) clarified the ethical issue at the heart of the cloning debate – and all leaders of the major parties opposed cloning on precisely this ethical ground. It was put succinctly by Queensland Labor MP, Dr Emerson:

The Lockhart review asserted with full confidence that there is no doubt that this process does create a human embryo. Furthermore, there is no dispute that such embryos are destined for destruction. Ultimately, we are being asked to agree to the creation of human life for the purposes of its destruction. I cannot agree with that, and I oppose the bill.ⁱ

Dr Emerson's reference to the clarifications made by the Lockhart review – the committee who recommended cloning – is vitally important for Queensland MPs.

It was a clarification that refuted all the efforts to obscure the central truth - that cloning does indeed create a living human embryo, which like an IVF embryo could develop as a human child.

Professor Loane Skene, the leader of the Lockhart Committee, told Senators:

We did not shy away from calling it an embryo because it is conceivable, as happened with Dolly the sheep, that if that entity were put into a woman, after a lot of care, it could in fact develop into a foetus. So we did call it an embryo.ⁱⁱ

An embryo which 'could in fact develop into a foetus' is nothing less, nothing other than a living human embryo. This absolutely central biological question can now be considered 'settled' – with [the majority report of the Senate Committee](#) confirming that no word other than 'embryo' is to be used:

3.13 The representatives of *Do No Harm* tabled at the hearing on Tuesday 25th November an Editorial from Nature which says 'Whether taken from a fertility clinic or made through cloning, a blastocyst embryo has the potential to become a full functional organism'. This is exactly what the Lockhart

Committee addressed in ensuring that an embryo created by SCNT is encompassed by the definition of embryo.ⁱⁱⁱ

In the light of this clarification, we trust that you will resist false arguments that attempt to dehumanise the cloned embryo - a rhetorical strategy intended to make these embryos available as mere raw material for research. Specious arguments such as: "it is not an embryo, because there was no sperm involved" – even though Dolly the sheep was cloned without sperm, but was undoubtedly a sheep embryo, born as a lamb.

Our association, *Do No Harm: Australians for Ethical Stem Cell Research*, has played its part in achieving ethical clarity in the Federal debate, and in correcting the falsehoods surrounding cloning and stem cell science, and we trust the attached submission will be of use to you in the State debate. It is in two parts – first, the central ethical issue of why cloning is wrong; then the secondary scientific issue of why cloning is unnecessary. Medical journal references to some adult stem cell treatments are attached as an appendix.

So we present for your consideration the true shape of stem cell science – to show why it is entirely reasonable to tell your constituents that, while opposing cloning on ethical grounds, you will put scarce research funds into the far more promising field of adult stem cells, a field which has both ethical and scientific integrity and is therefore in the deepest interests of both individuals and society.

The cloning lobby knows that its most effective approach is to send patient advocates to MPs to say: "If you don't vote for cloning, you are keeping my little Johnny in a wheelchair longer". Yet exactly the opposite is true: any MP who diverts money into the dead-end science of cloning and away from the 'galloping horse' of adult stem cell science (as Griffith University Professor Peter Silburn put it to the Senate committee) is quite likely to be delaying the one genuine hope such a child has.

We are getting the great benefits of stem cell research, both for treatment and research, with ethical adult stem cell science. As leading Queensland stem cell researcher, Professor Alan Mackay-Sim, told the recent Senate inquiry: "***The purpose for using therapeutic cloning can be achieved with adult stem cells***". ^{iv}

Cloning is unnecessary – the 'galloping horse' of adult stem cell science has made such magnificent progress with no help from cloning. Even this week we read of a historic human trial published in a prestigious medical journal using adult stem cells successfully in diabetics – achieving 'prolonged insulin independence'^v and of corneal blindness cured in a Melbourne man using adult stem cells;^{vi} in the last month we read of UK scientists growing human heart valve tissue from adult stem cells, and German scientists repairing human liver with bone marrow stem cells. The journal *Nature Biotechnology* estimated some 80 human treatments using adult stem cells – while there remains no case in any scientific journal of a single embryonic stem cell ever being used in humans, because they cause tumours in animals.

Therefore, for those MPs who accept that it is wrong to create human embryos solely for research and destruction, the great consolation is that we are getting the great benefits of stem cell science without any need for cloning. Cloning is wrong; it is also unnecessary.

For those MPs considering passing this legislation, please look again at how profoundly it degrades our humanity, even the basic relationship of mother and offspring. The Bill allows for an aborted baby girl to be made the 'mother' of a cloned embryo! An exploited embryo of a 'mother' who was never born. And consider that Australian ethicists are already proposing the 'next step': growing cloned embryos to the advanced fetal stage to harvest their organs for transplant, and also allowing cloned babies to be born.^{vii} These further inhumanities can only happen if the first steps in cloning are now permitted.

So in conclusion we plead with you to say 'no' to the dehumanising prospect of creating cloned human embryos solely for research, living human offspring created with no mother, no place in the human family, mere laboratory creatures for exploitation.

As the noted Australian jurist [Frank Brennan](#) put it recently:

But there is a second Rubicon. That is where we now stand. Beyond this is a city where the scientist is justified in creating human life only so that he might experiment on it and destroy it without the need for any respect of the dignity of that human life. ^{viii}

Will this Parliament cross that Rubicon, overturning the unanimous ethical judgement of the Parliament only four years ago, and agree to the intentional creation of living human embryos solely for research?

Please do not cross this Rubicon. There is no mandate from the Federal Parliament to do so. The Senate was split; the leaders of all major parties rejected cloning on ethical grounds. Please keep our State not only 'smart' but wise – where science remains at the service of our humanity, not desecrating our humanity as raw material for research. Say 'no' to this unnecessary evil, and turn instead to stem cell science that is both ethical and magnificently effective.

We are at your service, if there is any point of clarification to be made on the material attached, or to arrange discussion with specialist scientists. Further information is on our website at www.cloning.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

Dr David van Gend

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ⁱ Dr Emerson, Hansard at:

http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/view_document.aspx?id=2654417&table=HANSARDR

ⁱⁱ Prof Skene at Senate Inquiry Fri 20th Oct CA 9 at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/commtee/S9809.pdf>

iii Senate majority committee at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/clac_ctte/leg_response_lockhart_review/report/c03.pdf

iv Prof Alan Mackay-Sim, Senate Community Affairs Committee 23/10/06 CA68:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/commtee/S9810.pdf>

v Diabetes study in JAMA at: <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/297/14/1568>

vi Melbourne corneal stem cell transplant at: <http://www.sciencealert.com.au/news/20071804-15097-2.html>

vii See pg 6/7 of the 'Ethical Case' attached for detail on the aborted fetus, fetal farming, & live-birth cloning.