

LIFTING OF STEM CELL BAN LIFTS HOPE FOR PEOPLE WITH MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE

MND Australia congratulates the House of Representatives on its decision

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sydney – 6 December 2006

MND Australia welcomes today's decision by the House of Representatives to implement the recommendations of the Lockhart Report, lifting the current ban on therapeutic cloning or somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT).

The revoking of the ban by the government now allows embryonic stem cell research to be undertaken in Australia, keeping hope alive for the 1300 Australians living with the terminal neurological disease motor neurone disease (MND).

MND Associations in Australia supported the recommendations of the Lockhart Review and have campaigned throughout this debate for the lifting of the ban. Submissions, letters and emails have been sent to members of the Senate and the House of Representatives to raise awareness of the potential of this research for people living with MND.

The goal of therapeutic cloning or SCNT is to generate embryonic stem cells that are perfectly matched to a particular person. It has the potential to increase understanding of the causes of MND and the potential for the development of effective treatments and eventually a cure.

Congratulating MPs on their decision, Helen Sjardin-Howard, Chairperson of MND Australia said, "We are very pleased with the decision made by the House of Representatives as it provides hope for the future for those living with MND and other diseases like it. We congratulate the MPs for recognising the need for, and potential benefits of, embryonic stem cell research.

"We will look forward now to increased possibilities for treatments and therapies that may come from stem cell research. If stem cells do not prove to be the panacea for disease, and MND in particular, then they can be put aside and fresh directions can be taken in research," Helen Sjardin-Howard continued.

MND Australia supports research which is legal, has sound scientific rationale and has the potential to bring us closer to finding a cause, treatment or cure for motor neurone disease.

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Background

MND Australia is the national peak body for MND in Australia representing all State and Territory MND Associations who support people with MND, their families and carers. MND Australia strongly advocates that research using stem cells from all sources must be pursued in order to develop opportunities for treatment and cure of MND and other neurological diseases and injuries.

Facts about MND:

- FACT There is no known cause, no known cure and no effective treatment for MND
- FACT Each day in Australia at least one person dies from MND and another is diagnosed
- FACT MND is a terminal neurological disease
- FACT People with MND progressively lose the use of their limbs, their ability to speak, swallow and to breathe, whilst their mind and senses remain intact
- FACT Average life expectancy is 27 months
- FACT An estimated 1300 people have MND in Australia and thousands more, families and carers, live daily with the effects of MND

Notes for Media:

Detailed background on Stem Cells is available to journalists at:

<http://www.biotechnology.gov.au/assets/documents/bainternet/StemCells2006820060502132032.pdf>

Further information on the Lockhart Report is available at:

<http://www.lockhartreview.com.au/>

Further information on MND and MND Associations in Australia is available at:

www.mndaust.asn.au

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT:

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