



Australian Law Reform Commission
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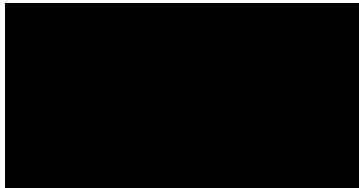
3 July 2025

Dear Australian Law Reform Commission,

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) is grateful for the opportunity to provide this submission into the Review of Human Tissue Laws.

Thank you for giving our submission your careful consideration.

Yours Faithfully,



Stephanie Croft
Strategic Policy Adviser, Australian Christian Lobby

Submission regarding the Australian Law Reform Commission Review of Human Tissue Laws.

AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN LOBBY

About Australian Christian Lobby

The vision of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) is to see Christian principles and ethics influencing the way we are governed, do business, and relate to each other as a community. ACL seeks to see a compassionate, just and moral society through having the public contributions of the Christian faith reflected in the political life of the nation.

With around 275,000 supporters, ACL facilitates professional engagement and dialogue between the Christian constituency and government, allowing the Voice of Christians to be heard in the public square. ACL is neither party-partisan nor denominationally aligned. ACL representatives bring a Christian perspective to policy makers in Federal, State and Territory Parliaments.

acl.org.au

The Australian Christian Lobby ('ACL') broadly supports voluntary tissue donation as it can provide lifesaving options for people in need. However, it is important that all legislation and policy in relation to the use of human tissue is underpinned by the principles that all human life is valued and should be treated with dignity. In this regard, the sanctity of human life, from conception to natural death, is paramount. It is also important that there are strong 'informed consent' protections for all human tissue arrangements, and strong penalties, regulation and investigative arrangements in place to prevent coercion.

However, we strongly oppose:

- the use of any human tissue from an aborted child (foetus) or surplus IVF embryos.
- the commercialisation/financial compensation generally for human tissue which can lead to organ trafficking and egg harvesting and can further disadvantage vulnerable people
- all human cloning and embryonic research
- all commercial and all international surrogacy arrangements, including egg harvesting/donation, due to ethical reasons and the risks of modern slavery.
- relaxation of Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) Laws or the introduction of VAD via Telehealth, due to the risks of elderly abuse and coercion, particularly when relatives or friends require organs for transplants.

We also recommend stronger laws requiring transparency and disclosure to the consumer when aborted foetal cells have been used in either the research or production of a product.

These points are addressed in more detail below, and align with the 8 questions in the ALRC's Issues Paper 'Review of Human Tissues Laws.'

Question 3: When we think about the laws governing how human tissue is obtained and used, what are good aims or objectives for these laws?

Additional good aims and objectives for these laws would be:

- Australia's human tissue laws should explicitly acknowledge the principle of human dignity and the sanctity of life as foundational ethical standards.
- Preventing any aborted child or surplus IVF embryo (foetus) material being used for any purpose
- Ensuring that any human tissue used in Australia or by Australians is not derived from modern slavery arrangements, organ trafficking and egg harvesting, or coercion.

Question 4: When we think about reforming human tissue laws, what principles should guide reform?

- It is important that all legislation and policy in relation to the use of human tissue is underpinned by the principle that all human life is valued and should be treated with dignity, as well as on the principle of the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.
- There is a need to ensure there is fully informed consent, to protect against modern slavery arrangements, organ trafficking and egg harvesting, or coercion.

Question 5: Do you agree that the issues set out in the section ‘Priority reform areas’ should be a focus for our Inquiry? Please tell us why you think these issues should or should not be a focus.

In relation to Priority Reform Area 1 ‘What should be included in the definition of tissue’?:

Need for prohibition of the use of foetal tissue

- Human tissue provided with informed consent can be life-saving for patients for various reasons and conditions. However, due to the serious ethical issues involved, an intentionally aborted/terminated child should be explicitly excluded from being used for any purpose including, but not limited to medical research, transplantation, other research, use in vaccines or clinical trials and product development.
- Many people have serious ethical concerns about this and can be less likely to access medical treatments and vaccines when aware aborted baby tissue (including foetal cell lines) has been used in the research and production of vaccines and medicine.
- Australia’s human tissue laws should explicitly acknowledge the principle of human dignity and the sanctity of life as foundational ethical standards.
- **Recommendation:** That legislation is enacted that explicitly prevents aborted or surplus human foetal tissue from being used for any purpose.

In relation to Priority Area 2: Issues related to the donation of tissue by living persons and Priority Area 5:

Advertising and trade in human tissue:

Need for prohibition of commercial trade in human tissue, including for surrogacy arrangements

- ACL strongly opposes any financial incentives or commercialisation of human tissue. The decision to donate should be an altruistic act, rather than a desire for income. Commercialisation will lead to disadvantaged, vulnerable people being preyed upon to serve the medical needs of the rich, and raises serious human and organ trafficking risks.
- Already in some countries, authoritarian regimes are conducting forced organ harvesting, and women are being exploited via modern slavery for surrogacy arrangements, including egg harvesting.
- **Recommendation:** Australia must maintain and strengthen prohibitions on the buying, selling or trading of human tissue. It should also ensure that domestic legislation prohibits the importation of tissue sourced from unethical or illegal overseas markets.
- **Recommendation:** Human tissue laws must be aligned with Australia’s Modern Slavery Act and include explicit bans on the importation or use of tissue obtained from practices that violate international human rights norms, including forced organ harvesting, coerced donation and trafficking.
- **Recommendation:** International and commercial surrogacy arrangements should continue to be banned in Australia.
- **Recommendation:** There should be exemptions in legislation to enable Federal, State and Territory Governments to advertise and promote organ donor opportunities generally.

Question 6: What, if any, other issues should we be focusing on in this Inquiry?

Protection of the elderly from forced Voluntary Assisted Dying to facilitate human tissue use

- In recent years, the extent of elder abuse has become apparent. For example, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) in February 2025 published statistics about older people with regards to family, domestic and sexual violence ¹. A key finding in the AIHW publication was that 1 in 6 (15% or 598,000) older people in Australia had experienced elder abuse in the past year. There is potential for the elderly to be coerced into VAD to obtain needed organs for family or friends.
- **Recommendation:** There are currently efforts by some VAD lobby groups to have existing protections in State and Territory VAD laws removed or relaxed, and to enable VAD via Telehealth. Given the high risks of elder abuse, financial and other incentives, and the difficulty in identifying coercion over the internet, Australian, State and Territory VAD laws should not be relaxed, and VAD via Telehealth appointment should not be introduced.

Stronger transparency and disclosure is needed if foetal tissue is used in research or products

- This is a sensitive and ethical matter, as many Australians are strongly opposed to abortion, conscientiously object to the use of foetal tissue in products or research, and would not want to inadvertently use a product that uses foetal cell lines or any tissue from an aborted/terminated child.
- **Recommendation:** We strongly urge that laws are enacted which explicitly require companies to clearly disclose on their product labels all products that have used foetal cell lines or any tissue from an aborted/terminated or stillborn child or surplus IVF embryos in either product research or production.

Question 8: Do you think it is important that we consider any of the issues in the section 'Issues we are unlikely to focus on in this Inquiry'? If so, why?

Yes, embryonic research

- ACL and many Australians strongly believe that life begins at conception. Conception refers to the fertilisation of an egg by a sperm, initiating the process of pregnancy. It's the moment a new life begins, marking the start of fetal development. Embryonic research involves using cells derived after conception and has human tissue use implications.
- Using life for research processes without the intention of the child being born is starting a life to end it, which gives rise to serious ethical issues. We oppose all forms of this, and it should be illegal. Although this research might be helpful in saving other lives, we must not create life only for those lives to inevitably end or never be born. These lives are just as valuable as the ones we are trying to save. We strongly oppose embryonic research.
- **Recommendation:** Australia should prohibit the use of tissue derived from aborted foetuses or human embryos in any research, commercial or therapeutic setting.

Other: The Human Tissues landscape table at 20. on page 4 of the Issues Paper should also include:

- Modern slavery legislation (NSW and Commonwealth)
- Surrogacy legislation
- Abortion legislation

¹ See this publication by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on 28 February 2025:
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/older-people>.