

Sex-selection of embryos challenged

The Interchurch Bioethics Council is speaking out against report commissioned by the Government that recommends allowing parents to choose the sex of their child.

Chairperson Dr Audrey Jarvis says sex selection based solely on the personal wishes of the parents suggests that the value of a child depends on its gender. She says gains made in New Zealand towards gender equality and a just society are potentially threatened by the concept of sex selection for social reasons.

Audrey says the council supports the use of pre-birth testing to prevent serious illness. This involves the selection of healthy embryos in situations where a family is known to be at risk from a major disability. "The parents would make their own decision to undergo testing, and decide what to do about the results. The benefits of embryo selection for medical reasons are accepted as outweighing cultural and social concerns".

This is a community issue, Audrey says, and she encourages everyone to have their say. Concerned readers can write and express their view to the Associate Minister for the Environment, Parliament Buildings, Molesworth Street, Wellington 6160, their local Member of Parliament or Toi te Taiao: the Bioethics Council, PO Box 10362, Wellington.

The complete report, *Who Gets Born? A report on the cultural, ethical and spiritual issues raised by pre-birth testing* can be obtained free from Toi te Taiao: the Bioethics Council by e-mailing info@bioethics.org.nz or downloaded from <http://www.bioethics.org.nz/publications/who-gets-born-jun08/index.html>

The Interchurch Bioethics Council was set up by the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches to consider biotechnology's spiritual, ethical and cultural dimensions. Contact jarvis.ab@xtra.co.nz for more information.

By Angela Singer, Spanz September 2008.