

## **Email Submission: Melinda White**

I write this submission after reading Elizabeth Farrelly's synopsis in the SMH of the proposed regulation changes. I am an average voter with a non-scientific bachelors degree. I have two very young children.

As a member of the public, I understand that the proposed changes would allow agricultural companies to edit plant and animal genes using the CRISPR technique but not declare those plants or animals as genetically modified. I also understand that the CRISPR technique is being used experimentally on viable and non-viable human embryos by research groups internationally.

Although I understand the arguments for companies to be able to increase agricultural yields, as an average consumer I am fundamentally opposed to these techniques being used without full disclosure to the consumer. And my preference as a voter would be to not see them introduced into Australian agriculture at all. My opposition is for the following reasons:

- Ethical slippery slope: arguably we have already been on this path for some time. But if our lawmakers are unable to draw an ethical line in the sand now when the technology is modifying our plant and animal food sources without proper disclosure, how on earth will they draw the line when asked to approve its use for designer babies? I do not want my children to inherit a future where only people with money will be able to be the strongest, most beautiful, least disease ridden humans on the planet (which is where this with ethically end up). I do work closely with business leaders and decision makers across the spectrum in Australia (and have done so with global companies in the past). I can categorically say that this group will never allow their personal ethical reservations about technology change to get in the way of arguing forcibly for regulation that will benefit their bottom line. So if this technology is deregulated for Plants and animals it is inevitable that industry will be back for deregulation for human embryos in the not too distant future.
- Ability to pass the edit onto offspring: we have no idea how this trait will impact natural eco systems. And if industry argues the two will never cross, just observe the plight of non-GMO farmers in the USA who end up ensnared in Monsanto's patent infringement net.
- the inventor of the technology themselves have already called for a pause in the use of it to properly assess its impact on human safety. I think this speaks for itself. The ultimate expert on the technology has reservations about its widespread, unregulated use. This alone should be enough for lawmakers to more than pause on the current set of recommendations for Australia.

Thank you for considering my submission.