

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune

Catholic lawmakers vow to defy Australian church leader on stem cell debate

The Associated Press
Tuesday, June 5, 2007

SYDNEY, Australia: Some Roman Catholic state lawmakers vowed



Wednesday to lift a ban on therapeutic cloning despite a warning from a senior Australian church leader that they would face "consequences" in their religious lives.

The Catholic archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, gave the warning to lawmakers Tuesday ahead of a debate in the New South Wales state Parliament on Wednesday over a bill that would lift a ban on the splicing of DNA from skin cells into human eggs to produce stem cells for medical research.

State Premier Morris Iemma and his deputy, John Watkins, are the highest-profile practicing Catholics who have announced their support for the bill.

Pell said he might refuse to give Iemma, who lives in Sydney, the sacrament of communion during Mass if the premier supports the bill.

"It is a serious moral matter and Catholic politicians who vote for this legislation must realize that their

voting has consequences for their place in the life of the church," Pell told reporters Tuesday.

Pell said he was not threatening to excommunicate lawmakers — the most serious possible sanction, in which a Catholic is cut off from the church.

lemma said he had not met any Catholic lawmaker who would be swayed by Pell's threat.

"He won't be dissuading me from doing what I believe is the right thing and that is supporting the bill," lemma said, adding that he did not believe any parish priest would refuse him communion.

A Sydney lawmaker from the ruling Labor Party, Tony Stewart, a Catholic, said Wednesday he was prepared to go to hell rather than oppose the legislation, which he said would save many lives.

Opposition lawmaker Adrian Piccoli, also a Catholic, said there would be "outrage" if an Islamic cleric told Muslim lawmakers how to vote.

"The vast majority of Catholics don't believe that the church should influence politics and politicians," Piccoli told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio.

The bill would bring Australia's most populous state into line with federal law. The federal Parliament lifted a ban on therapeutic cloning last year.

As in the federal Parliament, state lawmakers will be able to vote on the bill according to their consciences rather than the usual course of sticking to party lines.

Roman Catholics are the largest denomination in Australia, which is a predominantly Christian country.

Notes:

ADVERTISER LINKS

Terrorism - No-Nonsense

Guide from the New
Internationalist
Propaganda uses of word
Terrorism.
www.newint.com.au

What's ahead for US & UK?

The Bible is very clear!
Read the eye-opening
truth in our free offer
www.ucg.org.au

Top 5 Energy Stocks

Add some Green to your Portfolio.
Free Alternative Energy Report.
www.RisingStarStocks.com/Energy

Understanding The EU

The Myths & Mysteries of
the EU Explained - with
the latest EU news
www.inform-eu.com