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## Conscience vote on NSW stem cell bill

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NSW state government MPs will be allowed a conscience vote on legislation to allow therapeutic cloning.

Premier Morris Iemma has announced that legislation to overturn the current ban on stem cell research, also known as Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer, will be tabled in parliament on Tuesday.

If passed, it would bring NSW in line with the commonwealth, which overturned a ban on therapeutic cloning in December 2006.

"The legislation will ensure national consistency in this important area of medical research," Mr Iemma said.

"This is all about providing hope, hope to thousands of people who are suffering otherwise incurable diseases, and allowing research to be undertaken and treatments to be proposed."

Mr Iemma said all Labor members of the NSW parliament would be given a conscience vote on the legislation.

However, he said the bill would maintain the ban on human reproductive cloning.

Mr Iemma said he would vote in favour of overturning the ban on therapeutic cloning.

"I believe MPs ought to support this bill, it's a balanced package," he told reporters.


Science and Medical Research Minister Verity Firth said NSW would be left behind if it did not pass the legislation, which has already gained approval in Victoria.

"It's crucial NSW continues to provide opportunities for scientific and medical researchers to carry out groundbreaking and innovative research," she said.

"Without this new legislation we face the very real possibility that scientists will leave this state."

Liberal Leader Barry O'Farrell said MPs from his party would also be given a conscience on the issue.

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