



MEDIA STATEMENT

Minister for Women
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)
Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change, Environment & Water

Tuesday, 5 June 2007

CARDINAL PELL AND THE STEM CELL RESEARCH BILL

Cardinal Pell Release: *"The general public and our parliamentary representatives have been given little or no information or warning about this legislation."*

Response: The proposed NSW legislation implements the recommendations of the Lockhart Review which engaged in extensive community consultation. The Review consulted through a review website, written submissions, face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders, public hearings, facilitated stakeholder discussion forums, and selected site visits. This has been a three year process.

Cardinal Pell Release: *"...Allowing scientists open slather on human embryos for unethical research is not the best way forward."*

Response: Scientists will not be allowed open slather on human embryos. This statement is misguided at best and deliberately misleading at worst.

Any research conducted in this area already takes place within a rigorous regulatory framework. Research can only be conducted on embryos under a licence issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council Embryo Licensing Committee.

Cardinal Pell Release: *"We are now well down the slippery slope. What is there to stop further slippage?"*

Response: We are not on a 'slippery slope.' The prohibitions on human reproductive cloning are significant – 15 years imprisonment. The prohibitions have been in place since the Commonwealth legislation was introduced in 2002 and consolidated with the introduction of legislation in NSW in 2003.

There have been no known breaches of the legislation.

Cardinal Pell Release: *"Who is naive enough to believe that the few remaining limits will last?"*

Response: Again, this question is misleading. The remaining limits are not 'few' – they are extensive.

Cardinal Pell Release: *“No Catholic politician – indeed, no Christian person with respect for human life – who has properly informed his conscience about the facts and ethics in this area should vote in favour of this immoral legislation.”*

Response: While the strong views expressed by the Catholic Church should be respected, they are not shared by all people.

The Bill proposes that people who believe there is no moral problem with embryo research should be allowed to carry out this research, and should not be prevented from doing so by the law. Those people who think this research is wrong should be allowed to say so and those who do not wish to participate in treatments that arise from stem cell research should be allowed to avoid such treatments.

Cardinal Pell Release: *“This Bill would result in there being two classes of human embryos: those created to live and those manufactured to be eliminated in research. To produce a human embryo with the express purpose of destroying it for research – as if it were a lab rat – is a perverse new direction for human experimentation.”*

Response: This Bill draws a distinction between therapeutic cloning which will be legalised, and reproductive cloning which will remain illegal.

Many Australians accept and support Assisted Reproductive Technology and IVF occurring. In 2002, the Commonwealth Parliament, and subsequently, this Parliament, with the support of the majority of the community, allowed excess Assisted Reproductive Technology embryos to be used for research. These practices result in the inevitable destruction of embryos.

Unlike surplus embryos currently used from the IVF process which are sperm and egg embryos, therapeutic cloning uses an unfertilised egg, and no sperm.

Cardinal Pell Release: *“We were all embryos once. That is how we started and from there we developed. The human embryo cannot develop as anything other than a human being. Therefore, it has intrinsic human dignity and should be afforded that most basic of human rights – the right to live, to grow, to prosper.”*

Response: Embryos are not able to develop unless implanted in a uterus. It is illegal to implant an embryo created by therapeutic cloning under this Bill, punishable by 15 years jail.

Cardinal Pell Release: *“We should not blindly follow the lead of other parliaments in passing such unethical legislation. We can do better in New South Wales.”*

Response: The proposed legislation will bring NSW into line with Commonwealth laws that were passed in December of last year. Victoria has also passed similar legislation.

It is important to note that this legislation is “mirror” legislation – if it fails in NSW, national consistency will be impossible.

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