



NSW legislation to maintain ban on human cloning

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ALP members of the NSW Parliament will be allowed a conscience vote on legislation that maintains the ban on human reproductive cloning and creates nationally consistent laws governing therapeutic stem cell research, Premier Morris Iemma said today.

"I am committed to delivering a legal framework that will allow vital research into diabetes, Parkinson's disease, spinal injuries and other therapies to continue in NSW," Mr Iemma said.

"If this legislation does not pass NSW researchers will be forced to put down their microscopes and move to other states where similar legislation has passed.

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

"This is what I sought from the outset of the public debate on this matter

"The strict ban on human cloning will remain in place now and forever in NSW under a Labor Government."

"In so doing it will allow NSW researchers to work on new therapies that will help us better understand human diseases and may provide the treatments and therapies for many of the illnesses currently considered untreatable.

"The research will also help aid our understanding and treatment of infertility."

The *Human Cloning and Other Prohibited Practices Amendment Bill 2007*, which will today be table in the Parliament by the Minister for Science and Medical Research Verity Firth, would if passed allow new research activities to be undertaken within a strict regulatory framework.

"Given that this legislation raises many complex ethical and moral issues on which there are many different and strongly held views, I believe it appropriate that Labor MPs be given the right to make their own judgments and vote according to their conscience," said Mr Iemma.

The proposed Bill seeks to amend the current NSW legislation regulating research involving human embryos, bringing it into line with laws passed by the Commonwealth Parliament last December and more recently by the Victorian Parliament.



The most significant change that will be allowed under the new legislation is therapeutic cloning (or Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer) – a process which allows stem cells to be derived from an embryo created by merging an unfertilised egg with another cell, for example the skin cell of a patient.

"These stem cells are a match for a patient's own cells, thereby minimising the likelihood of any transplanted cells being rejected," said Ms Firth

"The process also has great potential to allow patient-specific diseases and treatments to be studied."

The Bill will also allow important research to be undertaken into infertility.

"The legislation I table today is compassionate, forward-thinking and balances the community's understandable anxiety about aspects of medical research with the opportunity to relieve human suffering," said Ms Firth.

The proposed Bill however **maintains prohibitions** on:

- Human cloning for reproduction;
- Collecting a viable human embryo from the body of a woman;
- Sale or trade of sperm, eggs and embryos;
- Creation of a human embryo by fertilisation of a human egg by a human sperm other than to achieve pregnancy in a particular woman;
- Implanting into the womb of a woman embryos created by any means other than fertilisation of a human egg by a human sperm; and
- Creating a chimeric embryo.

"Penalties for offences against these prohibited practices have been increased from 10 to 15 years gaol and the Commonwealth Licensing Committee's powers have been expanded and strengthened," said Ms Firth.

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