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Abbott may put own stem cell views aside

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Health Minister Tony Abbott says he will put his private views aside if federal parliament overturns a ban on therapeutic cloning.

Mr Abbott, a devout Catholic, says while he will vote against the private member's bill, he will put in place any necessary laws should it pass parliament.

"As a government minister, my duty is to discharge the law of the commonwealth. That's what I have to do as a minister and that's what I do," Mr Abbott told reporters.

"As a private citizen ... this is a conscience vote, I'll be expressing my views as a citizen."

Liberal senator Kay Patterson's private member's bill would allow scientists to clone embryos to extract their stem cells for medical research.


All MPs have been given a conscience vote on the legislation, which is due to be debated in the House of Representatives later this week.

Prime Minister John Howard says he will listen to the debate before telling parliament which way he intends to vote.

"Before I vote I'll tell the parliament what my position is," he said.

"I'm thinking about the matter and I will give a considered view to the parliament when I make a contribution."

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