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Australia lifts ban on therapeutic cloning for stem cell research

Newsletter story

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8 December 2006

This week saw Australian parliament debate and eventually lift its prohibition on human therapeutic cloning. Initial legislation governing stem cell research was adopted in 2002, and allowed the extraction of cells from surplus IVF embryos but did not permit the cloning of human embryos. The new bill, drafted by former Health Minister Kay Patterson, will allow the combining of genetic material from somatic cells with oocytes to form embryos, from which stem cells can be harvested. The cloned embryos produced cannot be implanted into a woman and must be destroyed after fourteen days.

The bill was opposed by both Australian Prime Minister, John Howard and the Leader of the Opposition, but a 'conscience vote' allowing members of the house to vote independently of party policy saw the bill passed by a majority of twenty. However, despite this result it is likely that progress in this specific area will be slow as guidelines for egg donation are drafted and scientists apply to regulatory bodies for research licenses.

In a comment to [BBC News](#), Kay Patterson stated, "this work's being done in Sweden, England, the United States, in Japan... I didn't see how we could accept any treatment derived from this in the future if we didn't allow the research here in ". She added that the legislation should be reviewed after three years and possibly made more liberal.

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