



CAMRA

Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research Australia

MEDIA RELEASE Wednesday, 28 November 2006

Supporters of therapeutic cloning ask MPs to vote "Yes" to Patterson Bill with "No" amendments

The peak patient advocacy group, The Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research in Australia (CAMRA), today urged MPs to support the therapeutic cloning Bill with **no amendments** in the imminent conscience vote.

At the same time they warned MPs that anyone tabling or supporting an amendment was almost certainly *not* a supporter of the Bill since an amended bill could be rejected by the Senate.

"Blocking or slowing the passage of legislation is likely to be a tactic by some of those opposing this Bill," said CAMRA spokesperson Joanna Knott, "We are asking MPs to vote "Yes" to the Bill - with no amendments".

CAMRA says, "We are urging MPs to delay this issue no longer. The Lockhart Review on stem cell legislation was tabled almost a year ago. The Report was almost shelved mid year. The bill is supported by the majority of the Australian community and it is the overwhelming opinion of scientific and medical experts that this research has tremendous potential to better human life. It would be a tragedy if Australia should waste any more time when scientists could be working on this important area like their peers overseas. Indeed, leading stem cell scientists have said they will be forced to leave Australia and work overseas if this Bill is not passed," said Ms. Knott.

The central thrust of the Bill is to allow therapeutic cloning and CAMRA said that to ban such scientifically authentic and ethically justifiable research would merely ensure that only rich Australians who could afford to travel overseas could benefit from therapies that may arise from such research.

"The issue before the Parliament is about legalizing research which may one day lead to improved treatments for chronic and life-threatening diseases and conditions.

It is about copying cells, *not* humans.

CAMRA is asking those MPs who remain undecided, to reflect on the fact that this line of research, undertaken within strict scientific and ethical protocols, has the potential to benefit many millions of Australians who currently suffer or will suffer from a range of chronic or life-threatening diseases and conditions.

“We are merely asking MPs to put those who are living with chronic conditions and incurable diseases first,” said Ms. Knott.

According to Roy Morgan research 80 per cent of Australians support embryonic stem cell research with stem cells made by merging an unfertilised egg with a skin cell (somatic cell nuclear transfer or therapeutic cloning), where no fertilisation with sperm takes place (June 14/15 2006).

“The vast majority of scientific and medical experts and a huge majority of the wider community support this research because it is ethically correct and has real potential to improve human life. So we urge MPs to agree with the Senate and say “Yes”.

CAMRA (the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research Australia), is a patient advocacy group representing spinal cord injury, motor neurone disease, Parkinson’s disease and juvenile diabetes.

In 2002, Federal Parliament gave approval for the use of excess in-vitro fertilization (IVF) embryos under licence, and within stringent scientific and ethical protocols. Despite dire warnings of medical disaster, and the “slippery slope” towards human cloning, all of the research was conducted ethically and without any evidence or accusation by its opponents that it has increased the risk of human cloning. For the record, all those groups supporting SCNT also unequivocally support the maintenance of the ban on research into human reproductive cloning.

On November 7 2006 the Senate voted in favour of The Patterson Bill 34:32.

END

Further information: Gabriel McDowell 02 8252 7090; Joanna Knott 0413 995992.

Unless otherwise indicated in this document, it is Copyright of the Commonwealth of Australia and the following applies:

Copyright Commonwealth of Australia. This material has been reproduced by permission but does not purport to be the official or authorised version. You should make independent inquiries and obtain appropriate advice before relying on the information in any important matter.

If you have any queries, please contact Capital Monitor, a division of LexisNexis Australia, on 02 6273 4899.