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MPs to get say on stem cell Bill

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MPs will have a chance to show whether they support or oppose the expansion of stem cell research after a controversial Bill passed its first major hurdle.

The legislation to overturn a ban on therapeutic cloning passed the Senate last night after a lineball vote.

Senator were using a rare conscience vote and now MPs will have a chance to do the same as the legislation moves to the lower house.

The debate had been expected to last a week but finished after two days of intense and emotional discussion.

A successful, last-minute amendment to the legislation by the Australian Democrats specifically ruled out animal-human hybrids.

Another increased from 10 to 15 years prison sentences for flouting safeguards designed to prevent abuse of embryonic cloning.

The additional safeguards will only come into effect if the Bill gets the final go-ahead from Parliament.

Former health minister Kay Patterson, who introduced the private member's Bill, hoped future generations may benefit from any extension of the research.

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