



Speech by

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**PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING BILL  
REGULATION OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN EMBRYOS AND  
ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY BILL**

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (6.29 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Prohibition of Human Cloning Bill and the Regulation of Research Involving Human Embryos and Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill. As the issues involved in these bills are sensitive, ethical and moral matters, I, like other members, intend to clearly outline my reasons for taking this position. The bill has been brought upon the parliament by advances in medical technology to the point where human cloning is now possible and where the scientific possibility of using embryonic stem cells to develop treatments for conditions like stroke and spinal cord injury are being explored. In that environment, the bill forms part of uniform national legislation and is the direct result of an agreement of all premiers and the Prime Minister, John Howard, at the Council of Australian Governments on 5 April 2002. It always seems to me that, if the Prime Minister supports it, it really cannot be all that progressive or all that radical.

There is broad agreement in the community that human cloning should be banned, and I share that view. Opposition to human cloning is a difficult argument to logically follow through to the end. As Bob Ellis recently wrote in the *Courier-Mail*—

What exactly is wrong with human cloning? Is there really any harm in replicating human beings? Human clones will, through the process of nurture, turn out to be different people and we do not, after all, have any problem with those who, through natural processes, have an identical genetic make-up—that is, identical twins.

I have thought through this argument and can simply say that to me an individual is unique, a one-off fluke of circumstance. Individuals are to be valued partly because no-one like them will ever happen again. Suggesting that a human being can be replicated undermines the beauty and value of that unique human life.

I now want to move on to the provisions which facilitate the use of embryos for stem cell research. The bill limits the use of embryos to those embryos which existed before 5 April last year and for which the consent of the parents or donors has been given. The bill specifically prevents the creation of embryos for the purposes of research and limits experimentation to those embryos which otherwise would be taken out of cold storage, put on the bench and allowed to die. A number of arguments have been advanced in opposition to embryonic stem cell research. Some have argued that there is no need to go down the path of embryonic stem cell research because adult stem cell research is just as good. Last week on ABC Radio I heard the absolutely confounding view that we should not allow embryonic stem cell research because it has not yet yielded significant therapeutic results.

I have listened to this argument, but I do not agree with it. While we can always find scientists to argue one way or another, the simple fact is that the majority of scientific opinion indicates that embryonic stem cells are more volatile, replicating into other cells and different types of cells more easily and as such they provide greater medical potential than do adult stem cells. At the very least we can be sure, as the Leader of the Opposition said earlier, that it is simply too early to shut the door on embryonic stem cell research. The real argument of course is not about the science. The real argument against embryonic stem cell research is that life is embodied in an embryo and that to experiment with an embryo is to destroy life. I am willing to respect that view, but I cannot accept it. We can argue until the cows come home about when life begins, but the bottom line is that we do not objectively know and it is possible that we never will.

I do not want to tell anyone that they are wrong about the point at which they see life, but I am going to tell those people that I see it differently. My conscience cannot condone the proposition that we should tell people who have medical conditions for which this research offers some hope that the research should not go ahead because of moral views which are held by a small proportion of the community. The facts are that this research may well lead to medical advances that improve the quality of life for some in the community. The fact is that with or without this research these embryos will die. My conscience tells me that in those circumstances this research should be supported.