



Speech by

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**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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

**Mr CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (6.48 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Prohibition of Human Cloning Bill and about why I feel it necessary to oppose the ability for people to enter into human cloning. Human cloning has again been put on the public agenda with various groups claiming not only that they have the ability to clone humans but also that they have had success in doing so on more than one occasion.

Human cloning is again a very complex and difficult issue. While possibly giving the gift of life, it raises incredible moral questions and also the ability for long-term sustainable life if it can be created by cloning. What amazed me in some of the presentations that I have seen on cloning is the need of the fusion process to create life. This is what many of us witnessed in cinemas where things such as Frankenstein were created by mad scientists, creating lives with various body parts and then lightning bolts and fusion were necessary to give life.

I would like to reiterate I am speaking against human cloning. Was this to cause fear in those of us who witnessed such movies, was it coincidence, or was it known that fusion creates life in what could possibly be described as a most unnatural way? Human cloning should be banned. I feel our society does not want it, will not accept it and, therefore, I support the antihuman cloning stance that is being taken.

I will now take the opportunity to state my position on the bill that is before us regarding research into embryonic stem cells. I would like to point out, firstly, that, as I have said in this parliament previously, I do not believe I am in a position to judge other people, to sit in judgment on their beliefs or their opinions on this very emotive issue. We have all experienced immensely different upbringings across different regions, states and indeed countries. People will agree and disagree with numerous points that have led me to the decision that I will make on the issue of embryonic stem cell research. I respect other's rights to disagree with me, but I trust they respect my right to hold an opinion whether they may or may not agree with it.

I must say that in our present world it is obvious that everyone will have differences of opinions and we must be proud of the fact that we have the ability to voice those opinions, whether or not we agree with others. But we should always support the right of people to voice their opinions, obviously within reason, and opinions on behalf of the communities which we represent.

A conscience vote on this issue has been well documented and a question to me always remains: is it the conscience of Chris Cummins or is it the conscience of the community he represents when he votes? On issues such as embryonic stem cell research it is very hard to gauge the position of the entire community. While there would be many within my community—indeed, the Queensland community—that are far more knowledgeable, have read and understood far more on the issues that we debate, I have been elected to represent the seat of Kawana and I find this is one of the most important and difficult issues that I have faced in the 50th Queensland Parliament.

My wife and I have been involved in fertility treatment performed by IVF specialists at Selangor Hospital on the Sunshine Coast, where we were regularly visiting the IVF fertility specialists when this

debate came to national prominence. I spoke in some detail with various specialists both there and in other areas on this issue, and obviously they had professional opinions and professional beliefs.

One very interesting point raised with me is that, if embryonic stem cell research is allowed, it may be necessary only for a short period of time with the discoveries that they may make that may allow—and I must again state it 'may allow'—the research to go to another level or a different degree or a higher point where in the future there may not be the need to utilise embryos for stem cell research. But then again it may not reach that point or level. At this point we do not know.

A valid issue was also raised with me that, if we go back to the eighties when IVF, in-vitro fertilisation, became the debate that our community faced, it was very controversial. Again, people had strong emotions on both sides of the spectrum with the various beliefs that people hold. IVF, as we know, basically assists to increase fertility and the ability to have a child or children—that is, assist in the creation of life or assist with people having the chance to give life and have a family.

I sincerely understand the dismay, disappointment and cynicism of those affected by numerous diseases and afflictions where these diseases or afflictions impede upon their quality of life. Again, I reiterate the position I take, and the way I vote is not an easy one but one that I must justify to myself and my community.

I have no doubt that members and many of our community have extensively read about embryonic stem cell research and possibly researched, listened to opinions debated and heard opinions of other people and expressed opinions themselves. At the end of it all, I can still not get past the fact that it is experimenting with or on human embryos. Many will raise the point: when does human life start? Again, opinions vary. Whether it is religious, medical, scientific, I feel experimenting with human life raises some obvious and major issues. In this House we set the laws that govern our society. Each time we change our stance or move the goalposts regarding the issues surrounding life, we change our world and our society forever. Many may say that this could be for the good, and some may argue the opposite.

I do feel that life is the most valuable and precious gift, and I fully understand when people say that the embryos that could be experimented on are to be destroyed. I do not wish to get into hypothetical questions because they will go on and on. The question I believe is: do embryos have the right to be destroyed with dignity or do we experiment with them? While that may seem a crass and somewhat simplistic statement, it is really what I feel is the basis of this very sensitive issue. I cannot support embryonic stem cell research, and I shall therefore be voting against this bill. I thank the House for the opportunity to enunciate my position on the issue.