



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.00 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Regulation of Research Involving Human Embryos and Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill and the Prohibition of Human Cloning Bill. I state at the outset that the splitting of these issues into two bills was welcomed by many not only in the community but also in this House, I being one. The Prohibition of Cloning Bill will be supported without exception as indicated by every member so far in this debate. Cloning is unacceptable in any form. As members need no convincing of this, I will move on to embryonic stem cell research involving human embryos.

For me the question is this: who is telling the truth when it comes to embryonic and adult stem cell research? Who is issuing misleading and unsubstantiated arguments to further their own cause and who has grasped onto the arguments from both sides to support their own hoped-for desire? I have listened to both sides of this argument from eminent and renowned specialists who have put forward arguments both for and against and I have undertaken an enormous amount of research of my own. When this debate was first put through the federal parliament with the fantastic claims being made that this research had the potential to cure all manner of diseases, I endeavoured to obtain as much information as I possibly could regarding the truth of the results claimed by those advocating the pursuit of embryonic stem cell research. As most members would be aware, I have a very vested interest in the claimed results being true.

I watched that cripple mouse walked with utter amazement and listened to the claims of this wonderful cure-all embryonic stem cell research. Like many others, my hopes were raised as to the possibility of experiencing a relatively healthy old age and not the slow degenerative one that I am aware is mapped out for me. I perhaps more than most in this House want the claims surrounding embryonic stem cell research to be true, but those who promote it have promoted it on a foundation of misrepresentations and false claims. They have played on the basic desire of the disabled to be well. They have played on their families and loved ones, their expectations, their hopes and their dreams, played on them mercilessly with unrealistic claims.

In all my hours of research on this issue I have not been able to discover one successful therapy undertaken in which embryonic stem cells have been used, but I have found a lot of maybes, possibles and mights. On the other hand, I have found reports of successful treatments in using adult stem cells in the case of Crohn's disease, a chronic disease, and thalassaemia, a blood disease. There are also reports of a team of doctors at the Dusseldorf University Clinic who have treated cardiac patients with stem cells from their own bodies. These stem cells were taken from the patient's own bone marrow and injected into their heart with dramatic results. The lack of rejection problems was a major advantage.

The member for Cunningham has mentioned other previously untreatable diseases with the treatment of adult stem cell research, as has the member for Gladstone. Rejection is reportedly a major problem with the use of embryonic stem cells. As with the transplantation of kidneys, hearts, et cetera, the need for immunosuppressant treatment is irrefutable, and so it is with the embryonic stem cells, because they are viewed by the body as foreign and are therefore attacked. This does not happen with adult stem cells. Although perhaps cynical, I question those behind this push to have a mercenary

objective with the fervour they are applying. Given the early stage of embryonic stem cell research to date, it is by no means certain that even one of the hopeful treatments can be realised. Promised cures for Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, motor-neurone disease and numerous other diseases are at this time nothing more than a deliberate deception by those promoting embryonic stem cell research. Professor Pender, a neuro-immunologist who works with victims of multiple sclerosis, refutes the possibility that embryonic stem cell research will cure these types of diseases which result in multiple scarring throughout multiple areas of the brain. The claims made have been refuted not by me but by eminently qualified professionals well versed in the realities of the procedures. Alternatively, these same professionals do support adult stem cell research because its results are documented.

The Nanango electorate also favours adult stem cell research. I polled that issue and the question asked was this: should adult stem cell research take precedence over embryonic stem cell research? Of almost 1,000 surveyed, 64 per cent were in favour, 24 per cent against and 12 per cent unsure. I questioned the real reason why this research is being pushed when realistic and credible advances are being made in the area of adult stem cell research. Those promoting embryonic stem cell research openly state that many of these embryonic stem cells will be used for drug testing and toxicology testing. Trounson cast immense doubt over the whole issue with his presentation of the white rat and the intentions of lobby groups have revealed that they are prepared to lie in an endeavour to hoodwink Australian parliaments.

The definition as to when the moment of life is recognised is a question that everybody in this House has to face over this bill. For a couple, within the womb or in a test tube, the desire for a child would lead them to say that life is real immediately on the fertilisation of the ova. For others it is after abortions become illegal and for others it is even later in the term or when a baby can survive outside the mother's womb. That is for each of us to search our own conscience, and I leave that issue for all members to decide. The basis of embryonic stem research, on the other hand, contravenes all basic scientific principles. In all research, whether it be skin care products, medication, transplants or other procedures, no experimentation is permitted on human tissue until there are irrefutable testing procedures to ensure side effects are minimal, if not non-existent, and are carried out over an extended period of time. Even for skin products or shampoos, this can take years and years. Why should it be any less for such an enormous step as embryonic stem cell research? I am not opposed to research based on scientific fact, on animal trials and realistic expectations. Embryonic stem cell research has yet to be proven in any of these most basic of ways.

Reports from leading specialists in many fields have stated that the nature of embryonic stem cells is to multiply at a rapidly uncontrolled rate—almost an explosion of growth into all types of tissue. It is reported that in mice four out of five tests have in fact resulted not in the hoped for cure but in tumours with the resultant destruction and death of the animal. The fact that the original proposal to the federal parliament revealed it to be based on shaky foundation of misleading information appals me. I believe that this is an issue that should not be rushed into, especially as its very foundation has been clouded with doubt. I believe that embryonic stem cell research on human tissue is still too premature and there has been no proof as yet conducted on animal tissue. I do not want to close the door on any form of research, but I am not satisfied that the people have been informed properly. I would ask that this parliament take one step back and take a long, realistic look at the basis of this research.

Unfortunately, \$43 million has been lost to provide adult stem cell research and other research with a scientific solid basis. Many people, both in this House and elsewhere, have been seduced by fiction and not fact. I for one would like to be able to support this bill. My husband asked me how I was going to vote because he wanted me to vote for it, but I cannot. It is based on a lot of fiction and not fact. I cannot support this bill.