



Speech by

**Ian Rickuss**

**MEMBER FOR LOCKYER**

Hansard Thursday, 11 October 2007

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## **RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN EMBRYOS AND PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—NPA) (8.06 pm): I rise to make a short statement on the Research Involving Human Embryos and Prohibition of Human Cloning Amendment Bill 2007. This bill effects the undertaking made by all states on 13 April 2007 to maintain a national approach to regulating human embryo research and cloning. There were presentations given that a lot of members attended. The bill retains important safeguards, such as the prohibition of activities including cloning of humans for reproductive purposes, making heritable alterations to the human embryo and creating or developing a chimeric embryo, which is a human embryo into which the cell of an animal has been introduced. It will also be an offence to allow an embryo to develop for more than 14 days. This is when the rudiment nervous system and the primitive streak first appears. I think there are actually quite a lot of good safeguards in this bill. It will be reviewed every three years, and I think that is very important too.

I am sure my constituents of the Lockyer realise that this type of legislation will always divide opinions. I think it would be irresponsible of me not to take a position that I do strongly believe in. I am a practising Lutheran who supports all the religious groups in my electorate. Martin Luther was a great reformer who was not afraid to question the principles and hierarchy of his day 500 years ago.

The legislation is about complex scientific procedures. I have read and listened to wide and varied opinions on this matter. I have listened to the speeches made in this parliament. However, it is my own personal experiences that have had a great impact on the way I will vote on this issue. Over 40 years ago, three of my nieces, Denise, Lisa and Jennifer, were Rh babies. The opposition leader, Jeff Seeney, mentioned the Rh blood deficiencies. This was quite a drama at the time. The babies had to have blood transfusions and their mother had to have blood transfusions. This was controversial at the time and opposed by many groups. My son and his wife have been involved in the IVF program due to his kidney problems as a child. Modern science has helped my daughter-in-law become pregnant so not only do I hope for them to have a happy, healthy baby in January but Ann and I will also become grandparents.

**Ms Jarratt:** Congratulations.

**Mr RICKUSS:** Thank you. Medical science has made these things possible. Less than two years ago, a very good friend of mine, Dehyl, died of motor neurone disease. Motor neurone is a terrible debilitating disease as it shuts down your body but does not affect your mental capacity. I gave the obituary at the funeral. It was heartbreaking for her husband, Richard, and her three children, Lyndell, Steven and Kerri, and their families and friends were shattered. Dehyl's children and grandchildren now live in the shadow of MN. Dehyl's brother John unfortunately now has MN. John is about my age, in his early 50s, with young children. As far as John is concerned, he is willing to try anything. He actually lives in Ipswich.

A friend of mine Peter Fry is in the gallery today. As members would have noticed, Peter is in a wheelchair and has been involved in discussions about stem cells. Peter moderates some of the spinal cord injury web sites that have over 16,000 members and has been to the United States investigating the issue, so he has a wide range of knowledge on this issue. Peter realises that a cure for his problems will not be found, but he does feel that we should not stop the scientific investigations to see what is possible.

This could at some stage come up with a solution that will assist people such as Peter and Dehyl. I find it hard to limit the possibilities for people such as Peter and Dehyl when I have not walked in their shoes.

Issues such as this are not simple, they are not easy, and they are not black and white. They are issues that parliamentarians spend sleepless nights over, but this is what being a parliamentarian is about. It is about trying to find ways to assist people with problems in fair and reasonable ways. People must keep looking for cures. If we do not try to solve problems, the human race would still be living in caves.

I am pleased that this bill will be reviewed in three years. As law-makers that is what we are supposed to do: review these laws and set the parameters. All of the members' opinions are their own and really are right in this debate. With those few words, I support the bill.