Speech by

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RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN EMBRYOS AND PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (9.48 pm): Today we are being asked to vote according to our consciences on the question of whether or not we allow human embryos to be cloned, experimented upon and then destroyed. I think it was federal Labor leader, Kevin Rudd, who summed up the significance of this debate when he described the Commonwealth's consideration of similar legislation as an ethical threshold.

I agree with him. For me, this is not a threshold that I will willingly cross. I will not be supporting human cloning. I will rigorously oppose this legislation because I do not believe that we should ever create human life for the explicit purpose of experimentation and destruction. It is simply wrong to destroy the weak to benefit others. Human life should never be an industrial material. Human life should never be an industrial commodity.

Human beings are an end in themselves not a means to an end. The prospect of creating new human life solely to be exploited and destroyed in the way proposed by this legislation, in my view, indicates a profound mistreatment of and disrespect for that human life.

This is unnecessary. There are many scientific achievements in the area of adult stem cell research which provide fruitful, ethical alternatives to the approach proposed by this legislation. I think we all in this parliament want to find cures and treatments for the many diseases and conditions that affect millions of people in the world but there are better and smarter approaches than the research proposed by this legislation.

I agree with Professor Alan Mackay-Sim, a neuroscientist and Queenslander of the Year in 2003. He said that adult stem cells can do everything that it is hoped embryonic stem cells might be able to do. Adult stem cells are superior because they do not carry the genetic damage caused by the cloning process. For the record, embryonic research is not new. It has in fact been around for almost two decades. Yet there are not new treatments for disease from this lengthy research.

Conversely, the completely ethical and non-controversial adult and other non-embryonic stem cells like umbilical cord blood have already been shown to have clinical applications for over 70 types of diseases including ovarian cancer, leukaemia, breast cancer, juvenile diabetes, Crohn's disease, Parkinson's disease, sickle cell anaemia and spinal cord injury. There are many more diseases and conditions that are already being assisted with treatments derived from adult stem cells. It is a long list. I seek leave to incorporate this list into my speech.

Leave granted.

Cancers

Brain Cancer
Retinoblastoma
Ovarian Cancer

Skin Cancer: Merkel Cell Carcinoma
Testicular Cancer
Tumors abdominal organs Lymphoma
Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
Hodgkin's Lymphoma
Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia
Acute Myelogenous Leukaemia
Chronic Myelogenous Leukaemia
Juvenile Myelomonocytic Leukaemia
Chronic Myelomonocytic Leukaemia
Cancer of the lymph nodes: Angioimmunoblastic Lymphadenopathy
Multiple Myeloma
Myelodysplasia Breast
Cancer Neuroblastoma
Renal Cell Carcinoma
Various Solid Tumors
Soft Tissue Sarcoma
Ewing's Sarcoma
Waldenstrom's macroglobulinemia
Hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis
POEMS syndrome
Myelofibrosis

Auto-Immune Diseases

Diabetes Type I (Juvenile)
Systemic Lupus
Sjogren's Syndrome
Myasthenia
Autoimmune Cytopenia
Scleromyxedema
Scleroderma
Crohn's Disease
Behcet's Disease
Rheumatoid Arthritis
Juvenile Arthritis
Multiple Sclerosis
Polychondritis
Systemic Vasculitis
Alopecia Universalis
Buerger's Disease

Cardiovascular

Acute Heart Damage
Chronic Coronary Artery Disease

Ocular

Corneal regeneration

Immunodeficiencies

Severe Combined Immunodeficiency Syndrome
X-linked Lymphoproliferative Syndrome
X-linked Hyper immunoglobulin M Syndrome

Neural Degenerative Diseases and Injuries

Parkinson's Disease
Spinal Cord Injury
Stroke Damage

Anemias and Other Blood Conditions

Sickle Cell Anemia
Sideroblastic Anemia
Aplastic Anemia
Red Cell Aplasia
Amegakaryocytic Thrombocytopenia
Thalassemia
Primary Amyloidosis
Diamond Blackfan Anemia
Fanconi's Anemia
Chronic Epstein-Barr Infection

Wounds and Injuries

Limb Gangrene
Surface Wound Healing
Jawbone Replacement
Skull Bone Repair

Other Metabolic Disorders

Hurler's Syndrome
Osteogenesis Imperfecta
Krabbe Leukodystrophy

Osteopetrosis
Cerebral X-Linked Adrenoleukodystrophy

Liver Disease

Chronic Liver Failure
Liver Cirrhosis

Bladder Disease

End-Stage Bladder Disease

Mr LEE: I do wish to place on the record my admiration for the great adult stem cell work being done at Griffith University by Professor Alan Mackay-Sim and his team. Using olfactory tissue to produce adult neural stem cells, Professor Mackay-Sim is working to repair nervous system damage. The professor and his team use olfactory stem cells to develop cellular models of diseases including schizophrenia, Parkinson's disease and motor neurone disease. Perhaps though the most impressive achievement of this research is the use of olfactory ensheathing cells from the noses of people with traumatic spinal cord injury. These cells are taken from the noses of patients and are grown in the lab and then transplanted into the injured person's spinal cord. This is incredibly exciting research and it has been undertaken using adult stem cells here in Queensland.

What I am saying is that embryonic stem cell research is not only ethically controversial but also in fact unnecessary. My further concern is that the dry gully that is embryonic stem cell research will act like a funding sponge, soaking up limited and precious research funds that should be invested in adult stem cell research. In essence I fear that we are backing the wrong horse.

There is a significant economic issue here. We know that there are stunningly good scientific breakthroughs coming almost daily from adult stem cell research but we continue to squeeze adult stem cell research funding. We need to dramatically increase state and federal funding for adult stem cell research.

This debate should not be a battle between adult stem cell research and embryonic stem cell research. The debate is really about the source of the embryos. This legislation allows for human embryos to be created by cloning only then to be experimented upon and destroyed. This I cannot support. I urge others to join me in saying yes to increased funding for adult stem cell research and no to human cloning.