



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING
FOR REPRODUCTION AND THE
REGULATION OF HUMAN EMBRYO
RESEARCH AMENDMENT BILL 2006**

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Wednesday, 6 December 2006

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 6 December 2006	Source House
Page 136	Proof No
Questioner	Responder
Speaker Andrews, Kevin, MP	Question No.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service) (7.11 pm)—I rise to support the amendment moved by the member for Bass. As I said in my second reading remarks, I oppose this bill because it has the effect of commodifying human life and, as my friend, the member for Lowe—who was on the committee which I chaired four years ago along with the member for Mitchell and others—found, the goalposts are moving all the time. The member for Lowe said that.

In the first place we were told all we needed was just four embryonic stem cell lines. That then moved. We are now in a situation where we have more than 100,000 embryos left over from IVF procedures in Australia in frozen storage. Under the law which currently exists and was passed by this parliament just four years ago, they are able to be used for research. There have been very few applications to use those embryos for research—and very few have been used for research—yet we are deciding today that we are going to allow embryos to be created over and above that 100,000 specifically for research.

The problem which is highlighted by this amendment is the basic flaw so far as the science is concerned, because this science will only work if there is a ready supply of eggs. The reality is that women, quite rightly, will not readily supply eggs given the health concerns and the ethical and moral objections that many have to that. Indeed, if you look at what has taken place in Great Britain, eggs will only be supplied by women where there is some commercial incentive to do so. That is the reality. So not only are we commodifying human life; we are then treating women as egg suppliers in a commercial sense. If that is not sufficient, then we have the proposition that you can obtain the reproductive material necessary for this science by looking to aborted female foetuses.

I say to honourable members who are listening to this debate: how many of you actually understood, before this amendment was proposed, that this legislation allowed this procedure to occur and allowed it to occur in a manner, which the Minister for Health and Ageing has pointed out, that is largely free of other regulatory processes? How many of you will go back to your constituents in your electorates and be able to honestly, frankly and sincerely stand up in front of those constituents and say to them: ‘I voted in full knowledge for a procedure which involved taking the reproductive cells from an aborted female foetus in order to create an embryo in order to carry out destructive research on an embryo’? Does anybody seriously suggest that this procedure has the support of the majority of the Australian people? I do not believe for one moment that this procedure has the support of the majority of the Australian people.

It was not that long ago that we had a debate in this place in which there were various views about questions of abortion. The one thing that came through strongly from that debate was that almost every member of this place said that there is too much abortion in Australia. We had various responses to that particular proposal, about which people came to their decision in various ways, but almost all said that there is too much of it. Yet, here we are, on the cusp of actually allowing aborted female foetuses to be farmed for their reproductive cells in order to create an embryo in order in turn to destroy that embryo. I simply do not believe that in any way the majority of Australians support this procedure, and I would urge honourable members to vote for the amendment.