



the **Australian Society** *for* **Medical Research**

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Ms Jillian Skinner
Shadow Minister for Health
3/65 Military Road,
Neutral Bay 2089

Dear Ms Skinner,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Human Reproductive Cloning and the Trans-Species Fertilisation Bills recently introduced in the NSW Parliament.

The ASMR commends the Gene Technology Bill as it will enact the relevant and necessary complementary legislation to operate in conjunction with the Federal Gene Technology Act. Because this area has been subject to wide consultation, the ASMR has no further comments or suggestions.

The ASMR also commends the Human Reproductive Cloning and the Trans-Species Fertilisation Bill to prohibit human reproductive cloning and the production of human hybrid embryos. We support this important area being covered by a separate piece of legislation, recognising that the Commonwealth's inclusion of a ban on human cloning within the Gene Technology Act was a stop-gap measure.

Parts 4 and 5 of the Bill will allow research on human stem cells, including embryonic stem cells and their use in human therapeutic cloning. This is to be commended as it provides both a regulatory basis by which exciting and significant new developments in medical research can be progressed while providing clarity and simplicity about lines of investigation that will not be permitted because of overwhelming ethical concerns.

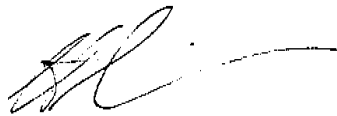
One area of potential concern is whether it may be technically possible for conventional reproductive technologies, such as IVF, to unwittingly fall foul of this new law. This is because identical twins are human clones. It is possible, indeed not uncommon, that whenever a human embryo is reimplanted in a woman after IVF, twins may be born as a result of the natural division of the embryo. Although the intent, in this case, was not to produce a human clone, a pair of identical would twins would be a genetic copy under the definitions proposed in the act and both the clinician and mother would be in breach of the Act. While suggesting that

suitable amendments are included to remove this concern, careful drafting is also necessary as, using techniques already established in animal husbandry, splitting of the embryo prior to reimplantation, and multiple reimplantations into one or more surrogate hosts, would constitute human reproductive cloning and clearly represent a clear breach of this Act.

ASMR has referred your request and these comments to the Endocrine, Reproductive Biology and Fertility Societies who may also provide additional input.

Thank you for seeking the input of the ASMR.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Schofield', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Prof Peter R Schofield
ASMR President-Elect

CC Mr Craig Knowles, Endocrine Society of Australian, Aust. Society for Reproductive Biology and Fertility Society of Australia.