



**PRESS
RELEASE**



DO NO HARM!

Australians for Ethical Stem Cell Research

CONTACT: DR DAVID VAN GEND, 0417 007066; 07-46329377; vangend@machousemedical.com.au

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - **FRIDAY 15th June 2007**

‘New stem cell science leaves cloning as dead as Dolly’ - Doctors urge NSW Upper House to shelve ‘redundant’ debate

In a letter to all NSW Upper House members, doctors opposed to the creation of human embryos for research have urged the scrapping of the cloning Bill, in the light of last week’s astounding new research showing an ethical alternative to cloning.

“Science rarely changes so dramatically, so quickly. Can legislators keep up?” asks Dr David van Gend, National Director and Dr Dianne Grocott, NSW Director of *Australians for Ethical Stem Cell Research*.

“Since June 7th the case for cloning has been radically undermined – the NSW Lower House voted to allow cloning based on the idea that there was no alternative way of obtaining the desired stem cells, but the NSW Upper House is in possession of new facts”, the doctors said.

The new research published on June 7th in *Nature* journal and *Stem Cell* journal demonstrates a simple method of turning mouse skin cells into genuine ‘pluripotent’ stem cells – the functional equivalent of embryonic stem cells. These stem cells are the holy grail of embryonic research - but here they are obtained without the unethical creation and destruction of cloned embryos.

Headlines last week around the world asked: ‘Does this do away with the contentious issue of creating and destroying cloned embryos?’ In short, this breakthrough promises all the hoped-for benefits without any ethical concerns whatsoever, and points to a way around the social and moral harm of cloning.

“The race is now on to apply the surprisingly straightforward procedure to human cells”, writes the *Nature* commentary, entitled [‘Simple switch turns cells embryonic’](#). “It’s unbelievable, just amazing,” says Hans Schöler (a stem-cell specialist at the Max Planck Institute in Münster who is not involved with any of the three articles). “For me it’s like Dolly [the first cloned mammal]. It’s that type of accomplishment.”

In a comment that sweeps away all concerns about commercialising women’s eggs, Shinya Yamanaka of Kyoto University, who pioneered the new technique, says “Neither eggs nor embryos are necessary. I’ve never worked with either.” Yamakana is in Australia this weekend, [addressing the international stem cell conference](#) in Cairns. “It’s easy. There’s no trick, no magic,” he says.

And in a classic understatement, *Nature* comments: “The method is inviting. Whereas cloning with humans was limited by the number of available eggs and by a tricky technique that takes some six months to master, Yamanaka’s method can use the most basic cells and can be accomplished with simple lab techniques.”

“When this radical new reality settles into the consciousness of any fair-minded legislator” Dr van Gend said, “they must ask: ***What compelling scientific justification is left for the inhuman act of cloning?***” **ENDS**