

# Please, keep our hope alive

## Family plea to allow stem cell research

By JEFF ZEUSCHNER

WANGARATTA couple Mac and Jill Keenan live in hope - which they're praying federal politicians keep alive by legalising human cloning for medical research in Australia.

In a desperate bid this year, the couple travelled to China where Jill underwent revolutionary stem cell therapy for a rare brain disease for which Australia has no cure or treatment.

Several months on, her condition has improved slightly, but the family remains hopeful further medical research into human cloning could unlock future treatment for her speech and balance afflictions.

They've welcomed last week's Senate vote, 34-31, giving in-principle support to Senator Kay Patterson's Therapeutic Cloning Bill which seeks to overturn the current ban.

The bill would allow researchers to clone human embryos to extract stem cells - the so called building blocks of all human tissue - in a bid to help further advance medical treatments.

The bill, however, still has a long way to go, likely to be subjected to amendments before it's put to a conscience vote in the lower house, and expectant strong debate on both sides.

For the Wangaratta couple though, a yes vote is the only way forward.

"You live in hope...you've got to," Mr Keenan said.

"We were told by the neurologist that there was nothing that could be done for Jill...just go away and face the gradual progression of the disease.

"But everyone needs some hope, even though ours was remote... without that you can't go on."

Mr Keenan said the couple was disappointed they had to go outside the country to pursue their treatment, and believe more research locally is crucial.

"Even though research would probably be in areas of more mainstream illnesses such as Parkinson's disease, there may be the chance of some offshoot of treatment that could help Jill, or other sufferers," Mr Keenan said.

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## Hundreds remember sacrifices



**A MINUTE'S SILENCE:** Veterans Keith Tail and Bob Giggins were among one of the largest crowds in years to attend Wangaratta's Remembrance Day service on Saturday. An estimate

