

26 August 2021

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

SUBMISSION on 'Ensuring Northern Territory Rights Bill 2021'

As a resident of the Northern Territory, I wish to advocate in favour of NT Senator Sam McMahon's Bill which amends the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978* to remove limits on the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly's powers to make laws in relation to voluntary assisted dying, among other things. The fact that it is a staunch CLP politician sponsoring the Bill should show the depth of feeling across the political spectrum in the NT in favour of restoring our dignity and rights as Australian Citizens.

When Territorians voted against statehood in 1998, it was not because we doubted our capacity to govern ourselves. Rather it was a rejection of the draft constitution proposed by Chief Minister Stone in place of the one drafted by the bipartisan NT Legislative Assembly Committee entrusted with that piece of work. The CLP's political fortunes since that time should be an object lesson to the Commonwealth government coalition partners about how Territorians view such high-handed behaviour.

By over-riding the Northern Territory's *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act* in 1997, and preventing us from passing laws on other social issues which affect our lives and the lives of those we love, the Commonwealth is sending the message that we are not worthy to, or capable of, exercising the full rights of citizenship enjoyed by our fellow Australians in the six states.

This is recognised by the ACT Human Rights Commissioner Dr Helen Watchirs when she said:

“. . . it is entirely inappropriate for the Commonwealth Parliament to determine a policy setting that is only relevant to the people in the ACT. The legislative impediment imposed by the Commonwealth on the ACT is a significant limitation on the human rights of citizens in the ACT. In my view, there is a serious question whether the Commonwealth's Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 is compatible with Australia's international human rights obligations. It should be for the ACT legislature to decide whether we should have voluntary assisted dying laws.”¹

The same, of course, is true for the Northern Territory.

So we Territorians look to your Committee to repair this infringement of our citizenship rights, and indeed of our Human Rights, by endorsing Senator McMahon's Bill. We also urge you to consider broadening the scope of the Bill to include the ACT, whose people labour under the same disadvantage and injustice as do the people of the Northern Territory.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

¹ [Commonwealth limiting human rights in ACT over euthanasia position: Minister](#), RIOTACT, 5 March 2021.