



**THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**

The Hon John Murphy MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 16 March 2011 regarding a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions about euthanasia and Senator Bob Brown's related private Senator's Bill.

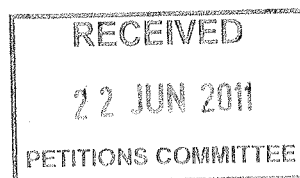
It is currently an offence in each State to counsel or aid a person to commit suicide. Commonwealth laws are consistent with these State laws, although the Commonwealth has no power to make laws directly about euthanasia. The Commonwealth *Criminal Code Act 1995* contains offences for using a carriage service to access or distribute suicide-related material with the intention of counselling or inciting suicide, or providing instruction on a particular method of committing suicide.

I understand that the petition received by the Committee was in response to the Private Senator's Bill introduced by Senator Bob Brown to restore the ability of the self-governing Territories (the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and Norfolk Island) to legislate in relation to voluntary euthanasia. Importantly, the Bill does not legalise euthanasia. The Territories would have to legislate to legalise euthanasia.

I appreciate that euthanasia is a sensitive and complex issue and that members of the community have strong views about this issue. As such, it is appropriate that Members of Parliament be able to vote according to their conscience on this issue. The Labor Party has previously allowed Members of Parliament to express their views on this issue with a conscience vote on the substantive issue of euthanasia. If a conscience vote on Senator Brown's Bill is called for, there is no reason why Government members would not be afforded this opportunity again.

I appreciate you writing to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely



**NICOLA ROXON**

21 JUN 2011