

## **Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee, Inquiry into Suicide**

This inquiry is problematic because it only speaks of prevention of suicide rather than support for suicidees and its focus is on youth, rather than the other part of the community which suicides and that is the aged and infirm (whatever their age). Many older people suicide because they are desperate about their ageing or the illnesses they suffer in their old age. Voluntary euthanasia societies around the country are fighting for recognition of their point that people with a terminal illness should be able to access physician assisted suicide. Exit, another organization that views end of life with compassion, is concerned to provide the elderly and ill with a range of techniques to allow people to die at the time of their choice and preferably with their loved ones around them.

Another issue that is not covered by the terms of reference is that those who do want to suicide are forced to take their lives in horrible ways. It is possible that the outcome of the committee's inquiry will be more effective methods of helping people not to commit suicide however there will always be people who regardless of the support of others will still want to commit suicide. Rather than treating them as 'on their own' it would be more compassionate to support them in their final moments with the use of drugs to ease them on their way. It is time for our society to acknowledge that there are people who do not want to live any longer and provide them with the means to ease their pain at being *forced to live against their will*.

The committee may not want to consider these views as they are not consistent with the terms of reference but it is important that they know and understand that there are people who do not consider that suicide is a bad thing. In fact for many of them it is the relief they seek from the difficulties that life presents especially at the end of life when illness makes their lives unbearable. For the young too such as Christopher Rossiter life was unbearable and fortunately he was able to end his life although he too was forced into dying in a horrible way by starving to death. These are cruel facts that it is unfortunate the committee appears not to be able to consider because of the limitations of the terms of reference.

The terms of reference are narrow and conventional in their outlook. While it is important to prevent young people whose experience of life is such that they want to commit suicide, it is the circumstances of their lives that need to be improved, something that government after government has not been able to do. Poverty in indigenous communities and among the young is hard to overcome. It is to be hoped that the committee will be able to make recommendations that have the effect of turning around the poverty in Australia and as result reducing the number of suicides in this demographic group.

It is of concern however that the committee appears not to be informed that there are other views on the topic of suicide. Perhaps they will not be recognised by the committee in its recommendations but it is important that they are brought to your attention.

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