

## **Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into suicide in Australia**

I hope that after reading all the submissions, and considering the facts presented to you, that you'll realise that

- "suicide" is a term that encompasses often vastly different situations.
- "suicide" statistics are often meaningless because of omissions or lack of available information to accurately reflect the true situation - the reality - behind the numbers.
- that the reason for the suicide is something very different for a person who is physically healthy compared with a person who is dying or experiencing intolerable physical suffering from advanced disease.

"Suicide" is a term that invokes descriptions such as "desperate" and "irrational", and has serious, deeply emotional and depressing connotations. However, in Australia the term "voluntary euthanasia" is another word that comes under the umbrella of "suicide". In legal terms it is, in fact, suicide, however the foundation of acts of "voluntary euthanasia" and "suicide" are vastly different. Both are acts that are entered into willingly, without duress, yet they are vastly different. Voluntary euthanasia is an act carried out by or for a person who, as I have mentioned above, is likely to be dying or experiencing intolerable physical suffering from advanced disease.

I'm sure that many doctors have, either knowingly or unknowingly, declared the deaths of many elderly patients as being from natural causes when in fact they were acts of voluntary euthanasia (suicide). The statistics tell us that each week 3 people aged 75 or over will "suicide". It's a pity that there is nothing to show the reality behind the numbers. The real motivation.

I request that the study that you are about to undertake clearly differentiate between the persons who are, or were, suffering with a chronic painful condition or fatal disease, and others who commit suicide for other reasons.

I request that you isolate these people and the corresponding statistics for what it really is - a rational decision made by a rational person who is suffering horrendous ill health and acts to hasten their death in order to stave off progression of the disease and further suffering.

18<sup>th</sup> November 2009