

The Secretariat,
Senate Legal & Constitutional Committee,
Room Sl.61.Parliament House,
Canberra. A.C.T. 2600.

Submission on Criminal Code Amendment(Suicide Related Material Offences) Bill 2004.

I wish to object to the contents of this Bill on two grounds :-

- (1) Censorship issues.
- (2) Civil Rights issues .

(1) Censorship of the internet is just as meretricious as book or film censorship. Over the past fifty years we have exercised censorship in both these areas far more carefully and cleverly. We have realised that the whiff of censorship tends to focus interest on an item and that, with the internet in particular , censorship is more difficult to apply, the draconian penalties of this Bill , notwithstanding . In a liberal democracy the free flow of information needs to be very nearly mandatory and consequences of repression hard to either justify or to anticipate . The issue of suicide cannot be considered , for instance , in the same category as pornography .

(2) Civil Liberties of the individual in a democracy are the very rock on which our society rests . Suicide is not illegal and individuals are both able and entitled to sort out relevant details in the information flow . It is obvious that medical advances of our time has prolonged life beyond previous expectation and that people must have ways to deal with issues that may concern them especially in the absence of any appropriately helpful legalisation of the right to die . Such legislation elsewhere in the world has taken the weight off the medical profession and has reduced the worry of the issue to older people , in particular .

I am outraged at the lack of autonomy accorded to the individual by the sledge-hammer approach of this Bill.

Gillian Walker

Gillian Walker

16 AUG 2004