



## PUBLIC SUBMISSION

### INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISIONS OF THE CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT (SUICIDE RELATED MATERIAL OFFENCES) BILL 2004

20 August 2004

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## **About the Australian Christian Lobby**

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) is a non-partisan political lobby group which represents the views of 100's of churches and 1000's of supporters Australia wide. The Christian constituency reflects a sizeable percentage of the broader community. 68% of the Australian population declared themselves Christian in the 2001 ABS Census and about 2 million Australians attend a church regularly (at least once a month). This submission reflects and forms part of the community standard in Australia and is therefore able to contribute significantly to the following inquiry.

## **ACL Position**

The ACL supports this Bill. Any legislation restricting the promotion of material that counsels, incites, promotes or instructs people to suicide is a positive, healthy and right law. It is right and compassionate to protect those more vulnerable members of our community, who are considering suicide, from material that will increase the possibility of them causing harm to themselves. Legislation for strong penalties against persons responsible for providing material promoting suicide methods is a good, right and just outcome.

## **Suggestions**

The only concerns about the Bill and possible additions that may help strengthen and clarify the purposes of the Bill are discussed below:

- The Bill could further strengthen the restrictions to promote suicide related material by extending to also include promotion of events and products or services that would plan to or be manufactured for the purpose of suicide. Although material promoting an event or the promotion of an individual product may not directly relate to a suicide method it has the same intent and outcome. The proposed amendments do not make it clear that such activity will also be restricted.

- Internet ISP providers overseas could also share responsibility in helping to restrict/filter suicide method promotion. Although this may eventually provide extra cost the user or taxpayer it would be a good and right outcome. This could be incorporated by including a penalty for internet ISP providers not taking steps to Restrict access to URLs for which they are responsible.

- Also of note is the weak penalty given to a person responsible for promoting a suicide method that directly causes a suicide. The stated penalty of \$110,000 seems light compared to other State based legislation about incitement to suicide, in which a jail term could be given.