

The Secretariat,  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee,  
Room S1.61, Parliament House,  
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Sirs,

Criminal Code Amendment (Suicide Related Material Offences) Bill 2004

As a person recently diagnosed with inoperable cancer, I object to the proposed Criminal Code Amendment (Suicide Related Material Offences) Bill 2004 and submit that it is most undemocratic in its attempt to stifle debate on a valid topic of concern to many Australians. When my time comes I would like the comfort of knowing that, should the pain become too much, that I can take control. With this knowledge I am sure that I would be willing to hold out much longer. As it is, should I decide I want to end my life I must do so while I am still in a reasonable physical condition with sufficient strength to do what I must do.

I believe that an informed debate about suicide results in a reduction in the number of suicides in this country. Persons aware of all their options will often extend their life by not acting prematurely. Unsuccessful suicide attempts often lead to unintended physical or mental harm. Many elderly people commit suicide in the most horrendous ways, and all because they were unable to source or were deprived of meaningful information and help. It is likely that, had these people been able to discuss their intention, some lives would not have been lost. For some, an attempt at suicide is a cry for help. This law would ensure that that cry would not be heard. Indeed with the risk of prosecution this law brings, it is more likely to ensure that attempts to suicide are successful.

The law makers should either legalise euthanasia or let this vulnerable section of the community gather any help and information they can. In a democracy censorship of the free distribution of information restricts rational debate.

I respectfully ask that members of the committee satisfy themselves that the Criminal Code Amendment (Suicide Related Offences) Bill 2004 does not prevent (intentionally or otherwise) the ongoing debate.

Sandra Milne  
Mt Gravatt

20th August 2004