

20th August 2004

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

The Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Queensland objects to the proposed Criminal Code Amendment (Suicide Related Material Offences) Bill 2004 and submits that it is undemocratic, and also unethical, in its attempt to stifle debate on a valid topic of concern to many Australians. The objective of our Society is to achieve legislation giving effect to the widely held public opinion that any person suffering, through illness or disability, severe pain or distress for which no remedy is available, should be entitled, by law, to a painless and dignified death, in accordance with that persons expressed directions.

We believe that an informed debate about suicide results in harm minimisation. 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. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics each week 3 persons over the age of 73 commit suicide in the most horrendous ways possible, 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, lives would not have been lost.

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.

We 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
for
Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Queensland