

Submission from Exit International lodged 1 April 2005

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

Dear Senators

Thank you for the opportunity to again provide a submission about the above proposed legislation. We note that there has been the addition of two new clauses 474.29A(3) and (4) and wish to add to our original submission of 20 Aug 04. We would also request the opportunity, as previously offered, to present material in person to the Senate committee

In Exit International's opinion the amendments do nothing to improve the nature and intent of the Bill and the Bill should be rejected outright. As Exit sees them, the proposed changes simply obfuscate further the very blurry parameters that this Bill sets up in regard to talk about dying with dignity.

Let us be clear, this Bill's main aim is to prevent rational adult Australians from using a carriage service to access any type of information about their end of life options. It should be realized that the censoring of this type of information will only promote the shameful national statistic of death by hanging as the leading means of suicide in this country. That is unless you intend to ban also shoe laces, belts, sheets etc.

If this Bill is passed, Exit will need to cease its core activity of providing accurate information on end of life options to our growing group of elderly members. To criminalize the use of the telephone used by so many of our elderly members to stay in touch with important end of life issues strikes at the very heart of a free society. We again stress - Information of this nature should not be censored as this Bill intends. It is not only un-Australian for the Australian government to dictate to its citizens what they should or should not read, ask, ponder upon, it sets a precedent for ignorance.

Ignorance breeds desperation. Desperate people do desperate things. We can do better.

Philip Nitschke
Director
Exit International