

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE VIEWS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

5.1 Committee members elected not to form a majority view on whether or how the Bill should proceed. Recognising that there are significantly diverging views on this issue among committee members, and that issues of this type have always been the subject of a conscience vote, the committee has decided to conclude this report by setting out the views of all Senators who participated in this inquiry.

5.2 Committee members agree that the Bill should not proceed in its current form. Committee members also agree with evidence that there is no room for doubt or uncertainty in the area of regulation of voluntary euthanasia. The committee is also of the view, as suggested at paragraph 4.60 of Chapter 4, that Commonwealth, state and territory governments should consider increasing funding and resources for palliative care as a high priority.

5.3 However, at this point the views of committee members diverge. As outlined in their dissenting report, Senators Barnett (Deputy Chair), Fisher and Trood consider that the Bill should not proceed in any form and that the Euthanasia Act should remain in force. Similarly, Senator Hogg's perspective is that the Euthanasia Act should not be repealed. Senator Bartlett's view is that the Bill should not proceed, and that there should be a debate around a possible legislative framework governing euthanasia at a national level, with any changes to the laws in this area applying consistently to all Australians. The views of these Senators are all expressed in greater detail in their statements following this chapter. Additional comments were also provided by several participating members, and are also included at the end of this report.

5.4 The Chair's view, endorsed by Senators Kirk and Marshall, is that an amended version of the Bill should proceed. These Senators do not necessarily support the legalisation of voluntary euthanasia, but rather are of the view that the territories should have the right to self-government without arbitrary interference from the Commonwealth. Their views are outlined in further detail in the following section.

