

Submission: Senate inquiry in support of the *Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008*

I am a twenty three year old resident of the Australian Capital Territory and am in favour of the *Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008* (The Bill). The Bill was introduced to federal parliament by Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown in February with the objective of restoring the 1996 Northern Territory voluntary euthanasia law that was overturned by federal parliament in 1997. This act denied the democratic rights of Northern Territorians and prevented the Australian Capital Territory and Norfolk Island (where democratic rights are not the same as for the States where the Federal Government can not overturn State legislation) from ever enacting similar legislation.

I am in support of the Bill for the following reasons:

1. A peaceful death is everybody's right. People with terminal illnesses should be able to make a decision to end their own life once they reach a point where they consider that the pain and suffering that they are enduring is no longer worth the physical and emotional cost.
2. Medical science is constantly producing new and more effective drugs that keep us alive longer but these do not necessarily ensure quality of life. No individual faced with a terminal illness should be forced to partake in treatment designed to prolong life, along with suffering and pain.
3. Desperate dying Australians are being driven to making difficult trips to Switzerland to access an assisted death, or to Mexico to purchase lethal drugs to take their own lives. This is far from a dignified or humane end to one's life – we can and must do better.
4. Since the Euthanasia Laws Act (known as the Andrews Act) was passed, the Netherlands, Belgium and Oregon have adopted assisted dying laws. This means that voluntary euthanasia is no longer something no parliament will consider. It also reflects building evidence against the claims made against voluntary euthanasia.
5. Several Australian states and New Zealand have debated euthanasia bills in recent years. While none have passed, the debate demonstrates that euthanasia is on the public agenda and that Australian Territories should not be excluded from the issue as they are at present.
6. **Support for voluntary euthanasia has grown from 75% to 80% in Australia (Newspoll 2007) in the period since the Northern Territory law was overturned.**

The rights of thousands of Australians to a peaceful death has been over-ridden by a political agenda without care or compassion. Now, over a decade later, the time has come to follow the lead of the nations mentioned above and make a responsible decision to allow individuals the right to peace and dignity in death if they so choose.