
From: Debra Battersby
Sent: Monday, 31 March 2008 2:54 PM
To: Legal and Constitutional, Committee (SEN)
Subject: No Euthanasia bill

Please hear my resounding NO to the euthanasia bill.

Whilst no-one wants to see someone they love endure pain, euthanasia is not the answer. My concern is that once legalised, euthanasia cannot be adequately controlled and results in the murder of patients who have not requested to die. Dutch researchers show that in Holland, where euthanasia has been legalised, around 1,000 patients are killed every year against their wishes, or without consent, by their doctors. These studies were published in the *Lancet* and the *New England Journal of Medicine* between 1991 and 2003.

Whilst a tiny minority are lobbying for the right to die, if this law is passed, I am deeply concerned that many more vulnerable people – namely the elderly, lonely, depressed, disabled or distressed – will feel pressure, whether real or imagined, to request an early death in order to avoid being a burden to others economically and whereby other people's convenience begin to dominate such decision-making. Our law should continue to protect the right to life: there is no right to die.

Society can never allow euthanasia to become a form of treatment. This is a terrible perversion of medicine. Doctors should never possess the power of life or death such power would seriously undermine the patient doctor trust bond that currently exists with the mandate to preserve and fight for life. Furthermore, euthanasia severely reduces patient autonomy and profoundly devalues the very essence of life that we all instinctively fight for. Such power in the hands of Doctors will undoubtedly lead to this power being abused by some whereby one may decide that a treatment is futile giving reason to terminate a life. It is worth recognising it is often disability rights groups who have often led the campaign against euthanasia because they recognise the risk it poses to people whose lives are sometimes seen as worthless by others.

There is also the risk that euthanasia could become in some case that answer to health cost whereby it is always cheaper and quicker to kill than to treat as legalised euthanasia becomes the preferred treatment option for an ever-increasing list of treatable, non-terminal inconvenient conditions. As a result, legalised euthanasia undermines medical care, especially palliative care. More resources need to be made available to preserve and maintain life whilst life itself exists

The second part of the Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008 gives the ACT and the NT the right to legislate on euthanasia. These are small territory assemblies with no upper house of review and only 17 members in the ACT and 25 in the NT. Such small legislatures with no upper house should not be given the power to make decisions on a life and death issue such as euthanasia which would radically change the social air we all breathe by severely undermining respect for life.

No amount of legislation can guarantee against the power to euthanasia being abused. We must at all cost morally and ethically protect those most vulnerable who could become victims of such a bill – we must fight for the life of all, especially those who have no voice.

Most Sincerely yours
Debra Battersby
