
From: Bronwyn Cozens
Sent: Monday, 31 March 2008 6:41 PM
To: Legal and Constitutional, Committee (SEN)
Subject: Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008

I wish to make a submission to the Senate Committee regarding this Bill.

Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008

I urge you to pass this Bill, and allow Voluntary Euthanasia to be lawful in Australia.

The law that was initially passes in NT was a compassionate and much-needed law, one which recognized the dignity and worth of terminally sick people.

Surveys widely reported in the media indicate that the majority of Australians now support voluntary euthanasia. I believe it is especially important now, as many doctors and health professionals are openly stating their commitment to the practice of euthanasia where patients have requested deliverance from terminal suffering.

Since 1996, The Netherlands, Oregon and Belgium have introduced laws permitting dying with dignity, and there has been no sign of the dire consequences feared by voluntary euthanasia opponents. In fact, there appears to have been a reduction in suicides, which is generally attributed to the peace of mind that sufferers have simply knowing they are able to exercise control over their own lives. I can think of nothing sadder or less humane than adding unnecessary fear and loss of dignity to the suffering of a terminally ill person. Palliative care is certainly an enormous benefit, but it is simply not true that everyone wants to 'hang on' as long as possible. There are, and always will be, those who choose to leave this life before their disease robs them of their quality of life. And they find ways to end their lives, in secret, alone, often bungling initial attempts before succeeding, bringing horror and grief on all their loved ones. Death can be a merciful release, but that phrase implies that the suffering must have been dreadful. Why do we, as a compassionate and civilized nation, insist that people must suffer before dying, when the death is imminent and inevitable. If the safeguards of the original legislation are observed, the choice can be made by each individual, safely and with respect and dignity. Terminally ill people will have the power to make their own choices, health professionals will be protected, and family members will no longer have to endure being the agony of being begged to 'help me end it'.

Voluntary euthanasia, handled with compassion and discretion, will offer confidence of choice to those terminally ill people who choose that path – though statistics suggest that many who indicate a preference for voluntary euthanasia do not actually take up the option; simply knowing that the option is available is enough to give them the peace they crave.

Please, for pity for all those desperate suicides, for the peace of terminally ill people, and for the safety of our compassionate health professionals, I beg you to repeal the Andrews Act, and to reinstate Voluntary Euthanasia, with all attendant safeguards.

Thank you for considering my views.

Bronwyn Cozens