

To the Senate Committee

**Re: Euthanasia Bill introduced by Greens' Senator Bob Brown
Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008**

I would like to express my opposition to the above Bill.

To 'open the door' to euthanasia will allow it to then uncontrollably cascade to its logical conclusion; the legal murder of patients who have not requested to die.

In Holland, where euthanasia is legal, the elderly are often afraid to seek medical attention, fearing that those they are going to for help will take their lives. Instead they suffer in silence. Around 1,000 patients are killed there annually against their wishes. (*Lancet* and the *New England Journal of Medicine*.)

A tiny minority are lobbying for the right to die, but if passed, this law would victimize the vulnerable people in our society. Our culture's laws should protect the lives of its people, not victimize and eradicate those who are a financial burden.

To give a doctor the power to take a life is a horrific perversion of medicine, and what one doctor considers futile, another may consider treatable. Where will the judgment end? It is always quicker and cheaper to kill than to treat, and for those concerned about health costs, termination of a life has the potential to become the preferred treatment, just as abortion has become birth control.

Other helpless individuals, such as the disabled, would also be at risk from euthanasia. After Belgium legalised euthanasia for competent adults in 2002, and although it remains illegal to kill babies, by 2005, 7% of deaths of newborn babies were due to lethal injection because they were premature or malformed at birth (*Lancet* 2005). In the Netherlands, 9% of deaths of newborn babies occurred following the administration of drugs designed to hasten death (*Lancet* 2005, *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 2005).

Please, let us learn from other countries who have introduced euthanasia. Belgium legalized euthanasia for competent adults in 2002, and has a culture similar to our own. The Bill sounds noble, but the facts from studies done are horrifying.

The introduction of legal euthanasia is a slippery-slide. Following this law to its conclusion will unfortunately prove that the vulnerable will be the ones who suffer, and often for the sake of reducing costs or for the convenience of others. Everyone's life is valuable.

Please, I ask that each one considering this Bill also consider their own vulnerability to this proposed law.

I also express my concerns regarding the second part of the Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008 which 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 which would have far-reaching implications for all Australians.

Respectfully yours

Mrs Nita Woodward