



Voluntary Euthanasia Society of NSW

ABN 22 002 545 235

Patron: Professor Peter Baume AO

PO Box 25, BROADWAY 2007

T: (02) 9212 4782 F: (02) 9211 1498

E: mail@vesnsw.org.au W: www.vesnsw.org.au

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

The Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008 provides an opportunity for the Federal Parliament to restore the democratic process to the people of the Northern Territory and Australia.

The Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 discriminated against the territories. Although the Act was not unconstitutional, it was completely against the spirit of democracy for the Commonwealth Parliament to override the democratic laws of a self-governing territory within Australia.

In the Northern Territory, the government made a considered and bold decision to allow terminally ill patients a dignified peaceful death.

In the last two decades, surveys have consistently shown that a majority of Australians believe that terminally ill individuals should have a right to seek and obtain assistance to end their life with dignity. In 1962 it was close to a majority (47%) and by 1978 it was up to 67%, and in 2002 was 73%+. An independent poll conducted by Newspoll in 2007 and found 80% of Australians in favour, and just 14% opposed.

Not only is the issue of voluntary euthanasia firmly on the agenda to stay, demands for individual autonomy over end-of-life decisions will become stronger with continued advances in medicine. The ability to ward off death longer and longer while the physical and mental degeneration continues is creating more and more situations in which people are enduring prolonged unnecessary suffering at the end of life.

In the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, and the American state of Oregon physicians are permitted to assist a patient in ending his or her life by means other than withdrawing life-sustaining medical treatment.

The Dutch know how voluntary euthanasia is practiced in their country, they know that legal euthanasia has improved, rather than harmed, their medical care, and they want the possibility of assistance in dying, if they should want and need it.

Isn't that a choice that everyone should have?



Voluntary Euthanasia Society of NSW

ABN 22 002 545 235

Patron: Professor Peter Baume AO

PO Box 25, BROADWAY 2007

T: (02) 9212 4782 F: (02) 9211 1498

E: mail@vesnsw.org.au W: www.vesnsw.org.au

Regularly we receive correspondence from the dying and their carers. Below is the edited content (to protect privacy) of a recent letter from a concerned friend of a dying man:

I have a friend who is terminally ill and who has tried since his quality of life has left him, a number of times to end his life. He is lying legless and in discomfort and pain...

I try to ring him on a daily basis. At every call he weeps and says that he is a 'smashed up animal and that it is cruel, so cruel to keep him alive'.

He said that if he had the use of his right hand he would write to you but as his hand is now paralysed he has given me your name and asked me to write to you.

As a humane society we should wish to help those whose torments are beyond endurance and who suffer in their dying.

Annemaree Adams

Coordinator