
From: Babette Francis
Sent: Monday, 7 April 2008 5:23 AM
To: Legal and Constitutional, Committee (SEN)
Subject: Submission on the Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Dear Senate Committee.

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

On behalf of our 2,500 supporters, I am writing to inform you that our organisation which is an NGO having special consultative status with the Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN is opposed to this Bill.

Many of our members made submissions and lobbied in favour of the Andrews Bill, and we see no reason why it should be repealed.

In the intervening years, there have been tremendous advances in medical treatment for those assumed to be terminally ill, many of whom are alive and functioning reasonably well for years after the initial diagnosis of a limited life span. Pain relief and palliative care have also improved vastly. Where there are inadequacies in these areas, that is where our focus should be, on research, expenditure and effort to improve treatments.

There is a major difference in the discontinuance of futile treatment - and patients have a right to reject treatments which offer no hope and are unduly burdensome - and the deliberate killing or assisting in the suicide of a patient. There is much wisdom in the old maxim "Thou shalt not kill but needst not strive endlessly to keep alive".

The option for euthanasia will soon become a duty to accept euthanasia as elderly parents feel guilt at being a burden on middle-aged children who are struggling to raise their own young children, pay mortgages etc.

Euthanasia will be seen as a respectable "choice" for many young people who may be temporarily depressed or unstable. "Assisted suicide" will have a corrupting influence on the medical profession, nursing staff, hospitals and nursing homes. Some elderly patients already experience a degree of neglect in below-par nursing homes. This neglect will be aggravated as the management of the nursing home may subconsciously "write off" such patients, assuming they are suitable candidates for euthanasia.

Please oppose this Bill and direct your efforts to improving the plight of those who are depressed, confronting terminal illnesses, who are in pain or lonely. Society will be enriched if we include such people in our communities instead of leaving them alone, isolated and deliberately hasten their deaths.

The Dutch have a law which regulates voluntary euthanasia, but studies regularly show that many doctors fail to observe it. Now new government-funded research has shown that ignoring the

law is not a prerogative of doctors. Nurses participate in 1 out of 8 cases of Dutch euthanasia -- which is definitely illegal. It appears that some doctors are insufficiently experienced in administering lethal drugs, so nurses step in.

The Dutch experience shows that once medical killing is legalized, it is difficult to regulate it. As with legalization of abortion, an entire killing industry based on profit grows and flourishes. Medical advances in the treatment of those who are seriously ill, physically or psychologically, requires us to have a life-affirming positive approach, not a death-dealing defeatist attitude.

We request that you oppose this Bill.

Mrs. Babette Francis
National & Overseas Co-ordinator,
Endeavour Forum Inc,