

From:

Rev. Stefan Slucki, Convener
Church and Nation Committee
Presbyterian Church of Australia.

RT Rev. Robert Benn
Moderator General
Presbyterian Church of Australia.

05.04.2008.

To:

The Secretary and members of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,
Parliament House Canberra 2600.

Re: "Rights of the terminally ill (euthanasia laws) repeal Bill 2008"

Dear Secretary and members,

We write to present the agreed position of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Church's Church and Nation Committee, concerning the "rights of the terminally ill (euthanasia laws) repeal Bill 2008"

At its recent meeting, the Church and Nation Committee which comprises representatives of the corresponding committees of the Presbyterian Churches in each of the Australian states, resolved to express its views in relation to the introduction of a private member's bill seeking to legalise the practice of euthanasia in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

That resolution states:

The Presbyterian Church of Australia is totally opposed to the "Rights of the terminally ill (euthanasia laws) repeal bill 2008" and urges all members of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee to reject it.

We recognize that some may consider supporting the Bill on something analogous to "States' Rights" grounds. However, at this stage in our constitutional development, the territories remain subject under the Constitution to the oversight of the Federal Parliament, and while this oversight continues, the moral issues addressed in Bills such as this should override all other considerations.

We further express our position on the matter of the legalization of euthanasia in the following terms:

The Presbyterian Church of Australia upholds the doctrine of the sanctity of human life, which is the gift of God the Creator, and expresses the view that *active euthanasia*, defined as the deliberate administration of a life-shortening treatment with the intention of terminating the life of an individual patient, is in breach of the Sixth Commandment, "*You shall not kill*", Exodus 20.13.

We recognize and uphold the right of a mentally sound, adult patient, to refuse to receive or to have withdrawn any treatment, even treatment on which life depends, if they so wish. In stating this, we are endorsing the right of a patient to let nature take its course.

We also affirm our strong support for the development and establishment of adequate palliative care facilities for the terminally ill, including competent pastoral care for patients and their families in what are necessarily very difficult circumstances.

In your deliberations on the proposed Bill, we urge you to take fully into consideration, the need for us as a nation, to affirm life in all its complexity and mystery.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. S. Slucki

Rt Rev. R. Benn.