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**Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and  
Constitutional Affairs for the Inquiry into the Rights of the Terminally Ill  
(Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008**

The West Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society submits that democracy requires that the voice of the people is recognized and acted upon. When representative government was granted to the Territories, it was understood that political authority will be vested in the people of such territories and that it will abolish rule from Canberra. To deny the right of the people of the Territories to decide for themselves what is good for them and generally to govern themselves according to their wishes and best judgements is at best short-sighted and at worst smacks of authoritarianism. It is arrogant to argue that the Federal Parliament is the sole repository of knowledge and good sense and is palpably false.

Any law, properly debated and discussed in the assemblies of the territories, should, if passed with majority agreement, be regarded as genuine wishes of the people and should be allowed to stand. Anything else will be denying the people their right to have their own voice heard.

We submit that there is not and can not have any good reason to deny the right of the people of the Territories to have their own choice according to their conscience and as expressed through their duly elected representatives in the assemblies.

It has been argued that the Federal Parliament does have the legal right to override any law enacted by a territory government. It may be a legal right but it ignores the failure to observe conventions or moral standards which have come to be regarded as binding. The rightful power to govern themselves should be restored to the people of the Territories and they should be allowed to enact laws regarding terminally ill people as they see fit and according to their conscience and judgements.

We realize that this inquiry is not on the merits of voluntary euthanasia, but wish to point out that extreme ideological view dictated the enactment of the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 and that fact should be taken into account while debating the merits of the present bill.

Voluntary Euthanasia is an issue which has agitated the minds of people for a long time and is a concept supported by over 80% of the general population and almost unanimously by persons over 70 years of age. Modern technology has made it possible for us to live longer, but unfortunately it has not succeeded in making us live necessarily better at an old age. Indeed it can be argued that modern medicine has only succeeded in prolonging the misery of the elderly. One need only visit a nursing home or an old age home to recognize the truth that while the society has steadfastly refused to allow the terminally ill to have their end-of-life choice, it has succeeded in condemning a vast majority of them in purgatory.

It is time we decided to give the people the right to decide about their life according to their conscience and judgement. It is sheer arrogance to think that anyone else can or should decide someone else's fate.

The Rights of the Terminally Act 1995, enacted by the Northern Territory Government after due consideration by the assembly said in the introduction, it is "an Act to confirm the right of a terminally ill person to request assistance from a medically qualified person to voluntarily terminate his or her life in a humane manner; to allow for such assistance to be given in certain circumstances without legal impediment to the person rendering the assistance; to provide procedural protection against the possibility of abuse of the rights recognised by this Act; and for related purposes". That right should be restored to them.

Ranjan Ray  
President  
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