

## **Right to Life Australia response to the Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008**

As a full-time practising specialist in intensive care medicine and anaesthesia, I am familiar with the issues facing patients and their families at the end-of-life. I deal daily with such issues and they are never far from the bedside in any ICU.

Like many, as a doctor I seek to uphold the sanctity of human life. I believe this to be a pillar of medical ethics and a safeguard for patients against abuse for economic, social or political reasons. Without this standard, the practice of medicine would fall into the hands of economic rationalism, which would provide treatment only to those worthy of such treatments for the economic or social benefit that they provide to society. Those whose treatment could not be justified on such grounds would be subject to withdrawal of care, or care that was limited to exclude more intensive treatments.

I believe that the introduction of euthanasia would create a situation where the most vulnerable people, the aged and the disabled, would be placed under enormous pressure to succumb. The mentality behind euthanasia is that some lives aren't worth living, and that it is better to be dead than alive if one has to live with 'indignity'. The vagaries are such that even the most vocal proponents of euthanasia can't say where that boundary lies, or even if there is any boundary at all, apart from a wish to be gone.

Yet as an inevitable part of the package, euthanasia offers death to the most vulnerable, and creates a selfish, uncaring society, where being elderly is to be a burden. I cannot conceive of a more frightening move, particularly when Australia faces the challenges of aging community in the next few decades. Greater will be the temptation to take the easy option of a quick death rather than deal with the complex care needs of the elderly.

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