

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Rose Bay NSW 2029
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8 April 2008

Dear Committee Secretary,

Please accept the enclosed submission for your inquiry into the Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008.

As a private citizen who has been directly affected by the Euthanasia Laws Act, I feel strongly that my voice be heard in the context of this inquiry.

I would welcome the opportunity to address the Committee in person.

Kind regards,

(signed)

Mrs Angelika Elliott

Submission
By
Mrs Angelika Elliott

On 15 January 2007 I took my husband to Zurich in Switzerland to die using that country's enlightened and civilised laws.

Aged almost 80 and dying of cancer of the bone marrow, John was in incredible pain. His suffering was unbearable.

As a long-standing committee member of the Cat Protection Society here in Sydney, I strongly resent the fact that I have been able, over the years, to take my elderly, sick cats to my local vet here in Double Bay. Their deaths have been as dignified as they have been peaceful.

Yet, when it was my own husband whose life (and death) were at stake, I was forced to take him to the other side of the world.

Dying is a fact of life. Another fact of life is that some people want choice in when they depart this earth. No politician or law should prevent that choice. I realise voluntary euthanasia is not for everyone and I accept that fully.

But choice *is* for everyone. My husband would have been so comforted from having this option. He hated his predicament and what it did to both him and myself.

That trip to Switzerland last January was the most traumatic experience of my life!

While I realise we were lucky and could afford the expense, I know that many others cannot. Those people should not be penalised

With our ageing population and with more of us being kept alive longer through the efforts of modern medicine, we must do better than a one-way trip to Zurich.

I tender my late husband's "Final Statement" as my (and his) submission to this Inquiry. I cannot improve on his sentiments and thoughts that were written in Zurich the day before died peacefully and with dignity in his sleep.

**My Final Statement
By
Dr John Elliott**

Zurich 24 January 2007

My name is John Elliott. I am a medical doctor from Sydney.

I am dying of Multiple Myeloma.

Because of my illness I have come to Zurich in Switzerland to use the service of the dying with dignity organization Dignitas.

I have made this trip half way around the world to try and achieve control in my passing. My disease has dictated that I will soon die. I will die in pain. Worst than this though, I will have no dignity in death.

I do not want my wife Angelika to see me this way. I have been a burden on her for too long already. Just as in my life as I have been an independent and capable person, so I want the same in my death.

I want to exit this world free with my head held high.

My decision to come to Dignitas is mine alone. I am not depressed. As one who is medically trained I know depression and this is not me. I am not even sad.

Rather, I am here in Zurich because it is the only legal option available to me as an Australian citizen. I have always been law-abiding and in dying I would not want to place others at risk of breaking the law.

I especially would not want wish Dr Philip Nitschke and his organization Exit International any sort of legal trouble. Without the support offered from Philip and Exit I would never have been able to make this trip. For this I am extremely grateful.

So at 9am on Thursday 25 January 2007 – two months short of my 80th birthday – I will die by drinking the lethal drug Nembutal. My wife will be with me.

I am sharing my story in the hope that others may not have to endure what I have endured in coming to Switzerland, as grateful as I am to this country for making my death possible.

I am sharing my story to help our politicians understand why people must be allowed control and responsibility in dying, just like they had in living.

My life is my choice. Good bye.

**Dr John Elliot
Fellow, Royal Society of Health**