

Submission to the

**Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee**

Inquiry into the

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

**NATIONAL CIVIC COUNCIL**

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## **National Civic Council**

The **National Civic Council (NCC)** is an independent, grass roots movement of people from across the nation who work together to defend the Australian way of life. We recognise the family as the centrepiece of our society and uphold the integrity of the individual from fertilisation to natural death. We support the role of the small business as the primary objective of economic policy. We love our country and acknowledge the role of religion in public life.

### **The current inquiry**

No doubt there were choices to be made in regards to where to refer this particular bill. By that the NCC suggests there may have been options to examine the social ramifications of this bill, rather than view it through a 'legal and constitutional' lens.

Hence, the Committee will surely appreciate that concerned members of the community (on both sides of the debate) will feel the need to discuss the issue of euthanasia itself, not simply debate the limit of Territorial rights.

In this brief submission (much having been said on the matter already), the NCC would like make a few points from both angles.

### **Territorial 'rights'**

The sheer fact that the mover of this bill, Greens Senator Bob Brown, appears to have failed to consult with key stakeholders (including, for example, the Northern Territory's Chief Minister) makes somewhat of a mockery of any rhetoric regarding supposed Territorial 'rights'.

More of a case for these 'rights' could perhaps have been made were the NT Government to have claimed them and sought assistance from their Federal colleagues in the process.

Furthermore, it seems premature to ignite a demarcation dispute between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth when the matter of potential statehood remains unresolved. Again, this matter, like the right to legislate for euthanasia, is an issue which ought to await at least some comment first from those it affects.

In short, it does seem somewhat ironic for a Tasmanian senator to be an unasked-for batsman for the Northern Territory...

## **Euthanasia itself**

As stated earlier, a great deal has already been said about euthanasia, particularly why it is not an advisable direction for public policy.

Debate on the original NT legislation, the 'Andrews Bill' which Senator Brown now seeks to repeal, and in countless other forums have provided ample evidence that euthanasia, while sounding good to some in theory, is fraught with actual and potential problems.

These include, but are in no way restricted to, the following:

- Wider introduction of euthanasia (were the NT legislation to be restored to effect) could be matched by a lessening of palliative care services over time;
- The value of human life would be severely lessened and cheapened (examples of putting down animal stock and pets as an argument for euthanasia being evidence that the value of human life is already under threat in the community);
- 'Euthanasia tourism' could be an unwelcome by-product, not just for the NT should this bill pass, but for any Territory which introduced euthanasia. There are well-known cases, including those of Australians, travelling to other jurisdictions to end their lives;
- The presence of euthanasia legislation, not to mention the increase in public debate surrounding it, runs the risk of increasing the suicide rate. Youth and those who suffer depression who are not terminally or 'hopelessly' ill are particularly at-risk;
- The actual or perceived pressure placed on ill and elderly citizens, were euthanasia to be available, would surely be immense in some cases of severe dependence, family facing financial hardship, or unscrupulous relatives;

## **Recommendation**

The National Civic Council respectfully recommends that the Committee find against this bill and support the status quo.

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State President  
National Civic Council (SA)

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