



# Knights of the Southern Cross (Australia) Inc

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The Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
**Canberra, ACT 2600**

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

This submission is prepared by the Knights of The Southern Cross (Australia) Inc. and submitted on their behalf by David R. Huppatz, Supreme Knight.

The Knights of the Southern Cross is an Order of Catholic men who are united throughout Australia as a fraternal order with objects which include the advancement of Australia and the fostering of the Christian way of life throughout the nation. Our Order does not concern itself with party politics but its membership includes members of all major political parties. One of the major national charitable works of our Order is concerned with care for the aged. Our work for the aged is done through Southern Cross Care Australia which presently accommodate approximately 16,000 elderly people in home units, hostels and nursing homes in all States and the Australian Capital Territory, and which provide as far as possible ongoing care. Day care centres are also conducted in several of our major complexes and a philosophy and standard of accommodation and care has been established which has the approval and support of the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. In summary, we are an organisation which is directly involved in providing to elderly people the care and support which will enable them to live out their lives and to die with dignity.

Our organisation holds firmly to the belief that life should be protected from the point of conception to that of a natural death. There is concern from our members that legalising euthanasia and assisted suicide will threaten the fundamental right to life of all people in our society.

It is through this concern that we make this submission to the senate inquiry regarding this Bill. We should indeed do all we can to alleviate the pain and suffering caused by illness but at the same time we as a community need to demonstrate our capacity for love, compassion and respect for human life.

The Knights of the Southern Cross does not support voluntary or involuntary euthanasia or assisted suicide as we feel that it is not in the best interest of our nation and therefore believe our representatives should vote against Senator Brown's Bill.

(David Huppatz)  
Supreme Knight  
Knights of the Southern Cross (Australia)

## **Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee regarding The Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008**

The Knights of the Southern Cross, (Australia) does not support voluntary or involuntary euthanasia or assisted suicide under any circumstances and therefore put the following submission before you.

**A great deal of effort and resources are bring put into programmes to address the growing incidents of suicide particularly among our youth yet this Bill supports suicide**

We believe that legalising euthanasia or medically assisted suicide sends the wrong message to society. It seems ambiguous that on one hand we are preparing legislation that condones suicide while on the other doing all we can to prevent it. The question to be asked therefore is – “Is suicide acceptable or not?”

It is disturbing to note that in some countries in which euthanasia and assisted suicide is legal changes to laws are or have been considered to not only include the terminally ill but also those suffering from mental or chronic physical disabilities.

This repeal Bill if passed could encourage all (the elderly, the ill, those suffering from dementia, depression, or facing a life of chronic disability) that suicide is a legitimate way to overcome their problems.

**We needed to be guided by the moral values that are shared in our society and that constitute both our inherited and developed wisdom.**

In our wisdom we have denied the right of any individual to dispose of the life of another. We have also denied the State this right through the abolition of the death penalty. To remove this would take away the right of all members of our society to the essential right of protection of life and expose us to a whole range of dangers.

There is overwhelming evidence received by similar parliamentary enquires around the world into euthanasia that it is dangerous to give someone the power to kill another. It is estimated that 1 in every 32 deaths in the Netherlands is the result of either legal or illegal euthanasia. The Remmelik Commission into Medical Practice and Euthanasia in Holland reported over 1000 deaths from involuntary Euthanasia.

If our in wisdom and in our sense of moral values we have denied the right to take life surely then we cannot accept the compromise of voluntary or assisted suicide.

The taking of life, by law, is only justified by self-defence or in the case of war. Every citizen's life is protected by the law and we are all equal before the law. It does not matter if we are young, sick, poor, disabled, mentally ill, or in pain our right to life is vindicated.

## **The Position of Doctors**

It would be of grave concern if we have medical professionals assisting in the ending of life rather than in its preservation. Such a reversal could fundamentally affect patient/doctor relationships and change the role of medical practitioners.

The basis of medical ethics goes back to the Hippocratic Oath –

*“I will prescribe regimen for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgement and never do harm to anyone. To please no one will I prescribe a deadly drug, nor give any advice which may cause his death”*

The doctor/patient relationship is based on trust. If that relationship is changed by doctors becoming takers of life rather than preservers of life there is a risk of damaging that trust.

The oath taken by our doctors and their set of ethics has served our community so well for so long. We should be reluctant to set it aside.

### **Effective palliative care is a more ethical approach to the support of a dying person.**

Throughout Australia the Knights of the Southern Cross have been active in their support of Palliative Care programmes and see this as the only appropriate way to administer care and comfort for the dying.

The Palliative Care Council of South Australia makes the following statement.

Palliative care aims to comfort, not to cure; to relieve pain and distress for people who are dying, and to support parents, families and friends in approaching death and healing grief.

Where sound palliative care practices are in place euthanasia is seldom seen as an option. Therefore it is imperative that Governments fund further developments for Palliative care rather than supporting the quick fix solution promoted by proponents of the pro- euthanasia movement.

The treatment that palliative care can give and the support and comfort given by health professionals in the field says “Despite your illness, despite the pain, you are a worthy person and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and that life is still worth living.”

Unfortunately many terminally ill patients feel that they are a burden to society their families and their carers and that it would be better if their life was terminated.

The other important aspect of palliative care programmes is that they support the grieving families to cope with the patient's illness and to support them during the final stages of their life's journey.

The Knights of the Southern Cross, which has branches across Australia, strongly oppose Senator Brown's Bill and urge that all Parliamentarians vote against it.