

9th April, 2008.

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO BOX 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

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

As a nurse, I am opposed to the above proposed Law.

For years, I have been involved in voluntary social work, hospital visitation, pastoral care and youth work amongst Aboriginal people in Indigenous Communities in Darwin.

English is not often an Aboriginal person's first language, and communication through interpreters about complex medical conditions or prognoses is not easy, and it unfortunately not infrequently misunderstandings can occur.

The occupation by indigenous patients of hospital beds at the Royal Darwin Hospital is often approx. 80%, as this sector of the NT population suffers far more illness than the average Australian.

As you would be aware, the present life expectancy of an Aboriginal person is considerably lower than that of the rest of the Australian population.

I am advised by Aboriginal friends that euthanasia is contrary to Indigenous cultural beliefs.

In consideration of the factors mentioned above, it would seem totally inappropriate to revive Australia's most ill-considered piece of legislation, i.e. the "Rights of the Terminally Ill".

Please note my opposition to the above Bill.

I would be very pleased to have the opportunity to appear with Aboriginal friends to be witnesses for the Committee when it visits Darwin to discuss the Bill.

Yours faithfully,

Isobel Gawler,
Registered Nurse