

# ATHEIST FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

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27 March 08

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

Peter Hallahan,  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee

Dear Mr Hallahan,

The overturning of the 'Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill' in the Northern Territory at the instigation of Kevin Andrew was a reprehensible display of bigoted religious ideology forced onto the population against their wishes under the guise of the legal technicality of it being a territory and not a state. The repealing of this act is a must to uphold that all citizens of Australia are equal before the law, whether residing in a state or territory.

- Kevin Andrews, operating within the conservatively blinkered Howard government, forced an unpopular and undemocratic decision on the Northern Territory inhabitants. Since then, Australians are waking up to the disturbing fact of interference of religion in politics on many fronts. MP's risk a voter backlash such as that which ousted the previous Liberal Coalition if there is a continuation of disrespect for the majority in their justified demands concerning the introduction of a system of Legal Voluntary Euthanasia.
- No one is immune from ending up in a position where assisted death is the only option in relieving terrible suffering.
- Religious leader's resistance to the introduction of any system of Legal Voluntary Euthanasia throughout the world has its basis only in dogma. Their stance is faith driven and does not encompass ethical consideration, a cornerstone of secular democracy.

- A recent poll in the extremely religious USA on the CNN web site demonstrated in excess of 80% of the respondents agreed with Legal Voluntary Euthanasia for those in unremitting pain because of a terminal illness. Polls in Australia have results likewise numbered.
- Switzerland has a system of Physician Assisted Suicide. The Netherlands, Oregon and Belgium have laws in place to assist those in need of a peaceful death. There is no evidence existing, which is unpolluted, suggesting these laws are not effective and working as intended thus disproving the much touted 'slippery slope' scenario.
- Governments responsible for not introducing a system of Legal Voluntary Euthanasia are to be condemned for the suffering produced. Citizens have to travel overseas to obtain a painless death. Others who cannot afford have no other option than ending their lives at their own hands, sometimes brutally and with unpredictable results. Others leave it too late and die in pain with all dignity lost.
- The public, as with other autonomous parts of their lives, want Legal Voluntary Euthanasia available. Verification is in the many attempts to have it introduced by various Bills before legislative bodies throughout Australia and New Zealand in the previous decade.
- Apart from the one Northern Territory experience, parliamentarians allowing religion to influence their vote have stymied all efforts in the introduction of compassionate regulation.
- Politicians who personally oppose the introduction of a system of Legal Voluntary Euthanasia on religious grounds have no right in a secular democracy to impose those views on the majority. They must abstain from voting or join the priesthood and work within a theocracy to further their religious agenda.
- It should be no secret that some people from religious quarters have distorted evidence to make a bogus case for the opposition to introducing Legal Voluntary Euthanasia. Politicians swayed by this propaganda are duty bound to make further independent investigation to justify those specious claims.

Sincerely,

David Nicholls  
President  
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