

Submission to:
The Senate Committee inquiry in support of the
Rights of the Terminally Ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008

1. The effect of criminalising assisted suicide is to make some elderly people kill themselves several years *before* they would die naturally, in case they become too weak to do it themselves. I am one of hundreds of thousands of Australians in their sixties and over, who view with trepidation my inevitable physical decline. I refuse to become one of the 'vegetables' in nursing homes that are washed, fed, dressed and toileted, while dribbling and puking and fouling themselves as brains decay – kept alive by drugs and 'palliative care'.
2. Australians may be living longer, but too often these extra years require constant medication and supervision and are spent in prohibitively expensive nursing homes, where, despite the best efforts of staff, the quality of life is such that many would rather be dead. I write from experience having had a sister condemned to many years in such a place. After seeing exhausted old people revived after contracting pneumonia and other diseases that would have given them a peaceful death, she signed a document demanding that she not be resuscitated should a similar thing happen to her. It was *very* difficult to find a doctor prepared to follow her instructions, but she was lucky and was allowed to die peacefully from pneumonia.
3. Because they can find no one to assist their death, desperate, sick and dying Australians are making the difficult trip to Switzerland to access an assisted death, and healthy people are going to Mexico to buy lethal drugs as 'insurance' for when life becomes intolerable.
4. Popular support for legalising assisted death has grown from 75% to 80% (Newspoll 2007) in the period since the Northern Territory law was overturned.
5. Several Western, democratic countries have passed laws permitting assisted suicide. None of those countries have experienced any of the problems that Australian opponents of the law predicted.
6. Australia should be governed by secular laws, *not* religious edicts. It is usually religious people who are afraid of dying, so they want to delay it as long as possible – no matter the emotional and physical cost. This is economically and morally corrupt. Secular people, having no fear of final judgements, nor dread of hell, accept that death is a natural part of life and, for those who have lived long, is frequently welcomed when the body becomes a burden too great to bear. This is not sad, it is normal, and to demand that no one may choose when to die because a politician's religion says an invisible superman in the sky would be displeased, is monumental insanity and cruelty. All arguments concerning voluntary euthanasia should be factual, based on proper research, **and take into account the best interests of those who want to die** – *not* of those who are frightened their support for such legislation will lose them votes in the next election.

Peter Rigby Taylor. 28th March, 2008.