



# Inquiry into Suicide in Australia

Submission to

Senate Community Affairs References Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
[community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)

by Medicine With Morality  
[www.medicinewithmorality.org.au](http://www.medicinewithmorality.org.au)

2 December 2009

## **Inquiry into Suicide in Australia**

We compliment the Senate on its attention to the impact of suicide in Australia.

The doctors of *Medicine With Morality* have been very concerned with moves by the states to include physician-assisted suicide in pro-euthanasia legislation thus sending a wrong message to the community about the legitimacy of suicide as a solution for distress.

Specifically we have been concerned with the attempts in Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia and are grateful that on each occasion the legislation has been defeated.

Our submissions to the State Parliaments can be viewed at  
<http://www.medicinewithoutmorality.info/MWMPPhysicianAssistedDyingVic.pdf>  
<http://www.medicinewithoutmorality.info/SubmissionDYINGWITHDIGNITYBILL2009.pdf>  
<http://www.medicinewithoutmorality.info/Nov2009SubmissionVoluntaryEuthanasiaBillSAMLCs.pdf>

Proposed legislations have included terms such as ‘existential’ and ‘intolerable’ suffering and could thus legitimise suicide where living itself is considered intolerable. As the excellent public education campaigns such as *Beyond Blue* point out, depression can lead to a perception of intolerability but if recognised is very treatable.

Given the present tragedy of suicide in Australia such legislation would lend ‘state’ approval for suicide as a valid option and therefore undermine the good that is being done on so many fronts to combat this. It would give approval for the young to consider what they would otherwise not consider.

As a nation we must not go down the path of suicide approval. We should make all efforts not to add to the philosophy already apparent in our society: *if things get too hard, I'll just kill myself.*

But it is clear that significant people in the euthanasia and physician assisted suicide lobby want suicide made easy and will continue to push its acceptance.

Ludwig Minelli head of *Dignitas International* claims that suicide and assisted suicide are human rights and then argues

If the Right to Suicide is a Human Right... we must accept that, in order to make use of this right, there must be no legal requirements other than that the person has the mental capacity needed to decide to end his or her own life. Any conditions which insisted that somebody must be terminally or severely ill would interfere with the essence of that Human Right. Human Rights are, inherently, unconditional.

[Assisted Suicide Backers Mislead the Public](#) by Wesley J. Smith August 11, 2008, Life News.com

Dr Philip Nitschke also argues that anyone – even troubled teens – should have the right to kill themselves:

...all people qualify, not just those with the training, knowledge, or resources to find out how to "give away" their life. And someone needs to provide this knowledge, training, or recourse necessary to anyone who wants it, including the depressed, the elderly bereaved, the troubled teen.

*National Review Online*, 5 June 2001

<http://www.nationalreview.com/interrogatory/interrogatory060501.shtml>

In light of the fact that the moves in the various states have come astonishingly close to passing physician-assisted suicide, we believe that the [National Suicide Prevention Strategy](#) has a role to play in advising state governments not to go in this direction. Even with strict “safe-guarding” definitions – which have not been evident thus far – the message that it is OK to opt-out if things get too tough is inescapable. If state governments fail to heed such advice then we believe the federal government should explore all possible avenues for national legislation to prohibit assisted suicide.

(signatories follow)