

Let People Choose to Die: Clergy

By JILL PENGELLEY

A BAPTIST minister is leading fellow Christians in a campaign to legalise voluntary euthanasia in South Australia.

The Reverend Trevor Bensch, a hospital chaplain, said his call was compassionate and "thoroughly consistent with the teachings of Jesus".

"People talk about the sanctity of life, which sounds nice, but that term was never used in the Bible," he said yesterday.

"You can always quote texts for and against almost any point of view."

Mr Bensch stressed he was not speaking for the Baptist Church, but said many Christians across a range of denominations supported legalising voluntary euthanasia.

He has written to State MPs asking them to support a voluntary euthanasia Bill. Independent Bob Such and Greens MLC Mark Parnell both have introduced Bills on the topic.

Mr Bensch said legislation needed to allow people to declare their choice early, in case their later illness rendered them unable to communicate.

"Some of the most pitiful cases I see are the outcome of accidents," he said.

"People have no prior warning and, after the accident, they're in no condition to make such a decision."

Mr Bensch and fellow Baptist Ian Wood have formed Christians Supporting Choice for Voluntary Euthanasia.

Mr Wood said politicians needed to know there was majority support for euthanasia.

"It's about compassion and love," he said. "Most people, regardless of whether they're religious or not, have this innate feeling they don't want people to suffer at the end of their lives."

Christians who want to add their voice to the message to Parliament can write to ChristiansforVE@westnet.com.au or to Ian Wood, 429 Anzac Rd, Port Pirie.

The Advertiser 23 Feb 09