

South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc.

Patrons:

Emeritus Professor JA Richardson
Robyn Layton LLB, LLM, QC

Internet: <http://www.saves.asn.au>



Please reply to:

Address: 11 Boord Court, Dernancourt SA 5075

E-mail: fcoombe@adam.com.au

Phone: (08) 8336 8994

Mobile: 0404 851 387

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To all members of the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly

A significant number of doctors risk criminal sanction by responding compassionately to their patient's hopeless and unbearable suffering.

Dear Member,

It is now widely acknowledged by palliative care experts that there are symptoms of pain and suffering that cannot be adequately relieved, even with optimal palliative care. As a response, many doctors disregard the law and intentionally hasten patients' deaths with drugs, assist with suicides and accede to requests for voluntary euthanasia.

The enclosed paper details the results of 7 Australian surveys that show the extent of this civil disobedience and the fact that a significant number of doctors are in favour of a change to the law so as to allow medically assisted dying. These doctors feel strongly that, in cases where intolerable suffering cannot be alleviated, their duty of care requires a compassionate response and they are prepared to break the law to follow this conviction.

The following important points arise from this evidence and I hope that you, as our lawmakers, will consider them fully.

- *These doctors agree that the only way some people can gain relief from their unbearable suffering is through death.*
- *It is not appropriate or fair that doctors are forced into the invidious position of risking criminal sanction when following their duty of care to relieve suffering.*
- *These necessarily covert practises lack regulation, accountability and the benefit of professional guidelines.*
- *Some of the assisted dying is by request but there is no way of guaranteeing it.*
- *Continual flouting of the law brings it into disrepute and leads to anarchy.*

If you would like any further information about the harm that is caused by our present prohibitive law please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Frances Coombe
President

