

# South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc.

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To all members of the Legislative Council

## WHY IS THE FOCUS ON “HOPELESSLY ILL” IN THE DIGNITY IN DYING BILL 2002?

Dear member,

The Dignity in Dying Bill 2002 seeks to allow those who are suffering intolerably from a hopeless illness to access assistance to die. The focus of this Bill is not restricted to only the terminally ill as this would discriminate against those who are suffering greatly but are not terminal and it would then effectively perpetuate suffering that has no hope of relief or cure. Both Shirley Nolan and Jo Shearer were hopelessly ill and suffering unbearably.

The attached paper explores the differences between hopeless illness and terminal illness, making it clear that the length of time one has to live is neither the sole determinant of its quality, nor the measure of suffering which will be experienced. I have included a couple of the points that may be of special interest to you:

- A hopeless illness is characterized by permanence, such that the patient will never recover, and severity leading to intolerable suffering which is incapable of being relieved.
- The emotional, psychological and existential components of the (hopeless) illness become more significant the longer it persists.

Courts around the world now accept the view that patients have the right to die, by withdrawal or withholding of treatment, whether or not they are terminally ill.

Those suffering greatly are relatively fortunate if they have only a short time to live due to their illness being diagnosed as terminal, compared with those who have an indefinite time frame of unrelievable suffering ahead of them due to hopeless illness.

We each have the right to face life and death according to our own faith and capacity. The Dignity in Dying Bill 2002 upholds everyone's right of choice while ensuring that parliament remains in control.

Yours sincerely,

**Frances Coombe**  
**President**