

# 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](mailto:fcoombe@adam.com.au)

**Phone:** (08) 8336 8994

**Mobile:** 0404 851 387

To all members of the South Australian Parliament

31/9/03

## Lies and deception continue

Dear Member,

Despite all evidence to the contrary, those opposed to voluntary euthanasia legislation continue to make iniquitous claims of “murder and mayhem” against the Netherlands, in a shameful attempt to discredit legislation in that country and thereby discredit the Dignity in Dying Bill currently before parliament.

The results of a third report of medical end of life decisions in the Netherlands in 2001 are now available (<http://image.thelancet.com/extras/03art3297web.pdf> “*Euthanasia and other end-of-life decisions in the Netherlands in 1990, 1995, and 2001*”) and they show, once again, that there is no evidence of a slippery slope. A few important facts arising from this survey are:

- Euthanasia accounted for 2.5% of all deaths in 2001, compared to 2.4% in 1995
- Physician assisted suicide accounted for 0.2% of all deaths in 2001, compared to 0.3% in 1995
- The reporting percentage for both these practises increased in 2001 to 54%, compared to that of 41% in 1995

Those who continue to deny the facts in the Netherlands also deny the facts in Australia. A replicated Rummelink survey in Australia shows that our prohibitive law against choice for voluntary euthanasia is not working and is arguably likely to lead to a slippery slope of abuse. I enclose a Fact Sheet comparing the incidence of medical end-of-life decisions in these 2 countries and in Flanders, Belgium.

These show that both in Australia and Flanders, the same degree of voluntary euthanasia is practised, despite the law. The most alarming statistic presented here is the high percentage of ending of life without an explicit request. Australia has a rate 5 times greater than that of the Netherlands. The Flanders figure is 4.5 times greater.

Those who continually deny all the facts are engaged in a disgraceful “fear and smear” campaign that is driven by ideological obstructionism. It is an undeniable fact that responsible legislation, such as the Dignity in Dying Bill, allows transparency, honesty, accountability and control, whilst also being a compassionate and humane response to intolerable suffering from a hopeless or terminal illness.

Yours sincerely,

**Frances Coombe**  
**President**