

AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF
***Right to Life* ASSOCIATIONS**
NEWS RELEASE

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KEATING GOVERNMENT URGED TO KILL N.T. EUTHANASIA LAW

The Australian Federation of Right to Life Associations today joined the Australian Medical Association in calling on the Keating Government to advise the Governor-General Bill Hayden to disallow the Northern Territory's Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995.

"Under Section 9 of the Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978, the Governor-General may within 6 months after the NT Administrator's assent to a proposed law disallow the law," said Greg Smith, Spokesman for the Federation. "This would be an exceptional decision but the circumstances are exceptional.

"Firstly, the Act breaches the inalienable right to life of all citizens.

"Secondly, the NT Government has admitted that the Act is flawed and cannot be made operable without the carriage of amendments.

"Thirdly, although the original Perron Bill was a private members' Bill with a conscience vote being allowed to all members, Chief Minister Shane Stone has announced he will not be allowing a conscience vote over these amendments, a decision which has aroused considerable concern among members of his own party and members of the public.

"Fourthly, although the Act provides immunity against prosecution or other action against doctors who kill or assist their terminally ill patients to commit suicide, there is clear recent High Court authority which prohibits such a law. In Walker v New South Wales (1994) 69ALJR 111 Mason, CJ sitting as a single judge ruled: "It is a basic principle that all people should stand equal before the law. A construction which results in different criminal sanctions applying to different persons for the same conduct offends that principle. The presumption applies with added force in the case of the criminal law, which is inherently universal in operation, and the aims of which would otherwise be frustrated," Mr Smith stated.

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-2-

"The Perron Act breaches this basic principle of law in that the Northern Territory Criminal Code at the time of the Administrator's Assent (16 June 1995) prohibited attempted suicide by any person. The Code continues to prohibit inciting, aiding and abetting suicide as well as assisted suicide. It also imposes duties on doctors not to kill or otherwise harm their patients. It imposes duties on all citizens not to kill another person and declares that no person may consent to their own killing.

"The Perron Act provides an impermissible carte blanche to a category of citizens to ignore these laws, which apply to every citizen.

"The Stone Northern Territory Government, in its anxiety to avoid criticism from a relatively tiny group of supporters of euthanasia, chooses to ignore this basic principle as well as ignoring the recent rejection of similar euthanasia bills by the Parliaments of South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand.

"Our Federation insists that the Keating Government exercises its supervisory role over the Northern Territory to cause the disallowance of this flawed and offensive legislation," Mr Smith concluded.



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