

**AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF RIGHT TO LIFE ASSOCIATIONS
MEDIA RELEASE**

NORTHERN TERRITORY MP'S URGED TO DUMP FLAWED EUTHANASIA LAW

The Australian Federation of Right to Life Associations today called on Northern Territory MLA's to put aside party considerations, factional loyalties, stubborn parochialism and personal ambitions in exercising their vote on Neil Bell's attempt to repeal the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act* (the Perron Act) and on the amendments to that Act.

"The Act was drafted by amateurs and its flaws are literally fatal," said Federation Spokeswoman Kath Harrigan. Mrs Harrigan stated that the Federation had recently written to all MLA's pointing out major flaws in the Perron Act which will not be cured by the proposed amendments. These flaws include:

- (a) **the definition of "terminal illness"**, which would allow persons with chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, kidney and heart problems, who refuse conventional treatment to obtain euthanasia or assisted suicide under the provisions of the Perron Act, even though if they maintained their treatment they could live comfortably for years;
- (b) **no restrictions on non-Territorians obtaining euthanasia or assisted suicide**, which arrogantly ignores the sovereignty of other States, Territories and other Countries and encourages unscrupulous doctors to settle in the Territory to cash in on wealthy non-residents with a death wish;
- (c) **indirect racial discrimination against aboriginals by containing no provisions to protect them from being pressured into euthanasia.**

In addition, the Coroner is stripped of his very important normal jurisdiction to investigate suicides and deliberate killings, so that abuses will go undetected.

The Federation letter to MLA's also criticised the amendments as **having the effect of weakening rather than strengthening safeguards** against abuses of the Act by:

- (a) **allowing non-resident psychiatrists to clear patients for euthanasia, even those with treatable depression or other psychiatric disorders not caused by the terminal illness, in breach of the ethics and law in their own States and Territories;**
- (b) **lessening the strict standards for interpreters imposed under the Perron Act by allowing interpreters who cannot satisfy standards acceptable to a court, to assist with requests for euthanasia by aboriginals and other residents who are not fluent in English. Recent court cases have highlighted the shortage of skilled interpreters in the Territory.**

"We urge Northern Territory MLA's to show true concern for the dying and the maintenance of respect for life and proper patient care by doctors by supporting improvement in palliative care services and rejecting euthanasia and assisted suicide," Mrs Harrigan concluded.

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