



# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA

Anglican Church of Australia \* Antiochian Orthodox Church \* Armenian Apostolic Church \* Assyrian Church of the East \* Churches of Christ \* Coptic Orthodox Church \* Greek Orthodox Church \* Roman Catholic Church \* Religious Society of Friends \* Romanian Orthodox Church \* Salvation Army \* Syrian Orthodox Church \* Uniting Church in Australia

*For Euthanasia*

07 SEP 1995

## TO ALL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

### EUTHANASIA

The churches recognise that there is considerable community debate and discussion about euthanasia. We recognise that there is in Australian society a wide range of meanings attached to the term euthanasia and thus there is considerable confusion of views. We recognise too that most families have experienced grief at the suffering of a loved one. We share in the concern of all Australians seeking to love and care for and alleviate the suffering of the terminally ill.

**The churches affirm the following principles as they apply to euthanasia:**

- a) Euthanasia - understood as deliberately causing the death of a terminally ill person in order to bring that person's suffering to an end - we reject as contrary to God's law and the values of a civilised society.
- b) Life is a gift from God and as such is to be cherished; it should be the primary intent of law to sustain and enhance life, not to destroy it.
- c) Dying is an integral part of the cycle of life and death; while we naturally cling to life, at some point death must be accepted as inevitable.
- d) The withdrawal of excessively burdensome or futile medical interventions does not constitute euthanasia; to describe it as "passive euthanasia" causes confusion in the public debate.
- e) Optimal palliative care should be available to all people regardless of their age, or economic or social circumstances. Economic expediency must not become the occasion for the introduction of euthanasia.
- f) People should never be made to feel they are a burden, that they have a "duty to die" and that they need to take measures to cause their own death.

To condone the deliberate killing of the most vulnerable is potentially to risk the status of all human life in our community.

We therefore urge the parliaments of Australia to show commitment to their people by opting for care, not killing, and to resist any moves to substitute euthanasia for effective palliative care.

**This is a public statement resolved by the Executive of the National Council of Churches in Australia, at its meeting of 24-25 July 1995, and subsequently endorsed by the heads of these member churches:-**

The Anglican Church of Australia	Archbishop Keith Rayner
The Antiochian Orthodox Church	Archbishop Gibran
The Armenian Apostolic Church	Archbishop Baliozian
The Assyrian Church of the East	Bishop Mar Meelis Zaia
The Churches of Christ	Mr Robert Leane
The Coptic Orthodox Church	The Revd Marcos Tawfik
The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia	Archbishop Stylianos
The Roman Catholic Church	Cardinal Edward Clancy
The Romanian Orthodox Church	The Revd Dr Gabriel Popescu
The Salvation Army [Eastern Territory]	Commissioner John Gowans
[Southern Territory]	Commissioner John Clinch
The Uniting Church in Australia	Mrs Jill Tabart