

Doctors Opposed to Euthanasia

Parliament House
North Terrace,
ADELAIDE SA 5000

18th October 2010

Dear ,

We have written to you on a number of occasions regarding the *Criminal Law Consolidation (Medical Defences—End of Life Arrangements) Amendment Bill 2011* voicing our opposition to the passage of this bill given that it contains provisions for protection in law for acts of euthanasia and/or assisted suicide.

On this occasion, we write in defence of our profession and our various medical specialities in respect to the effect that the Gardner amendments will have upon the provision of ordinary medical care in end-of-life situations.

The Gardner amendments that now form part of the bill seem to us to be a form of so-called ‘safeguards’ that attempt to guard against abuses in euthanasia and/or assisted suicide. However, the conditions that these new clauses create will also have an effect upon normal medical practice in end-of-life situations.

If this bill were to become law, it would require any change in drug management for a patient in end-of-life circumstances, including any increase in dosage, to be preceded by two referrals and two opinions on each occasion. Such changes can and do occur repeatedly in the course of normal care. By our reading, without complying with such a burdensome and unnecessary bureaucratic process, we would not be able to claim a defence in law should our patient die as an indirect result.

Further, the impost of such a time consuming and unnecessary process may well have a detrimental effect upon the care of our patient. Already palliative care services in South Australia are stretched to the limit. Further paperwork to provide good palliative care to all end-of-life patients including those not requesting euthanasia will be difficult to execute and resented by most doctors. Normally, if we determine that the dosage of pain relief needs to be increased to provide comfort and relief, we can and do act in a timely manner. Under this new bill, we can only guess at the effect of what will undoubtedly be a significant time delay to secure the two additional opinions.

If this bill becomes law, it will create havoc in the medical profession and the care of those in need. We accept that this was probably not the intention of these amendments; however, the effects will be significant and entirely negative.

This bill cannot be allowed to proceed.

Yours sincerely,

Doctors Opposed to Euthanasia

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Haematology Consultant, Cancer Specialist

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Emeritus Consultant Surgeon at the Royal Adelaide Hospital

Signed on behalf of the full list of signatories (below):

Co-signatories: