



## Australian Government

### Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

ONE NATIONAL CIRCUIT  
BARTON

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22 September 2011

The Right Reverend John D Harrower OAM  
Bishop of Tasmania  
Anglican Diocese of Tasmania  
GPO Box 748  
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Dear Reverend Harrower

Thank you for your letter of 16 August 2011 to the Prime Minister regarding euthanasia and funding for palliative care services. I have been asked to reply on the Prime Minister's behalf.

Euthanasia is a sensitive and complex issue that raises serious moral, ethical and legal considerations. Laws affecting euthanasia are overseen and administered by state and territory governments. Euthanasia is currently illegal in all states and territories; it is also currently an offence to counsel or aid a person to commit suicide. Euthanasia laws were considered but not passed in a number of states in 2010. Private members' bills seeking to legalise euthanasia may again be introduced in some states later in 2011.

Euthanasia is the act of ending a life, whereas palliative care is end of life care for a person who is dying.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of end of life care and the dedication of those caring for loved ones with a serious illness. The relevant focus within Australia's health care community and the Australian Government is on maintaining the quality of life for people with a life limiting illness.

The Australian Government is committed to continuing the development of a quality national palliative care system by working collaboratively with state and territory governments. The *National Palliative Care Strategy 2010 – Supporting Australians to Live Well at the End of Life* represents the combined commitments of the Australian, state and territory governments. It guides the development and implementation of palliative care policies, strategies and services across Australia. One of the goals of the Strategy is that appropriate and effective end of life care is available to all Australians based on need.

While the Commonwealth, states and territories are committed to working together to provide quality palliative care, specific palliative care services are provided by the states and territories as part of their hospital and community health service provision.

The Australian Government's National Palliative Care Program funds a range of national initiatives to ensure quality palliative care and to improve access to services for both people who are dying and their families. These initiatives include significant national projects that support quality of care, research, workforce development and clinical and performance information development. Many of these initiatives are being implemented cooperatively with state and territory governments.

Yours sincerely



Alex Anderson  
Assistant Secretary  
Legal Policy Branch