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WITS No.: 63927

The Right Reverend John Harrower
Bishop of Tasmania
Anglican Diocese of Tasmania
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30 SEP 2011

Dear Reverend Harrower

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 August 2011 regarding your Synod meeting's expression of opposition to voluntary euthanasia. I acknowledge your organisation's concerns about the protection of the vulnerable.

The Palliative Care service and medical professionals throughout Tasmania have been providing quality care for people at the end of their life for many years, and this Government is committed to the continued provision of high quality palliative care services throughout Tasmania.

Quality palliative care directly addresses the suffering and dignity of patients, and offers hope that their independence can continue as long as possible. In these ways it counters an inclination to seek euthanasia.

The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services (the Agency) is working on a number of initiatives to improve the care that people receive at the end of their life. These include advance care planning strategies that encourage people to record their wishes for their care in a document called an Advance Care Directive, and ensuring that doctors and hospital staff provide consistent and appropriate care in line with the patient's wishes in the event that the patient can no longer communicate.

The fact is that many people will exercise their right not to receive intensive treatment as the end of their life nears, and it is lawful that their wishes be respected and this is entirely different from euthanasia.

I understand that a draft Euthanasia Bill is likely to be available for public comment later this year or early next year. I encourage your organisation to participate in this public consultation when it commences.

Thank you once again for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely



Michelle O'Byrne MP
Minister for Health