

Premier

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23 DEC 2011

The Right Reverend John D Harrower OAM
Bishop of Tasmania
GPO Box 125 Macquarie Street
Hobart TAS 7001

Dear Reverend Harrower

Thank you for your letter of 16 August 2011 on behalf of the Anglican community of Tasmania regarding the proposed Dying with Dignity legislation.

I appreciate you writing to me to express the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania's opposition to voluntary euthanasia and physician assisted suicide and I accept the reasons behind the Church's opposition to voluntary euthanasia.

Voluntary euthanasia is an issue that I personally support and, as announced in June 2011, I intend to pursue this matter as a Private Member with the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens, Mr Nick McKim.

I recognise that legalising voluntary euthanasia is a serious step for any state to take on behalf of its citizens, and I do not underestimate that both sides of the euthanasia debate are very passionate about the position they take on this matter. I do support improving end of life decision-making, including the provision of voluntary euthanasia through Dying with Dignity legislation for the terminally ill, however, I recognise that this issue must be carefully and sensitively managed.

In supporting a dying with dignity approach, I would like to make it clear that it doesn't lessen my support for palliative care. To the contrary, I am proud of the strong palliative care system we have in Tasmania, but recognise that for some terminally ill people, for whom palliative care does not meet with their needs, the option of dying with dignity is still important.

Although Mr McKim's 2009 Dying with Dignity Private Member's Bill failed to gain majority support in the House of Assembly, some Members who voted against the Bill did state they supported the principle of voluntary euthanasia. Similarly, polling has shown on a number of occasions that there is broad community support for legislation that gives the terminally ill the right to choose a peaceful and dignified death within a safe, regulated medical and legal framework. Such a framework would help remove any confusion or grey areas that exist under our present



system for medical practitioners, families and law enforcement authorities. Therefore, I believe that law reform in this area warrants further exploration.

Mr McKim and I will be looking at existing models to see what can work in a Tasmanian context, and, once an appropriate model is developed, we will consult with the Tasmanian community and stakeholders, including the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania.

Thank you once again for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lara Giddings', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Lara Giddings, MP
Premier