

**Submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry into the
Ensuring Northern Territory Rights Bill 2021**

From: Dinny Laurence

Senator Sam McMahon's Bill is about reducing the level of Commonwealth interference with laws of the Northern Territory.

By repealing certain sections of the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978*, including section 50(1) preventing the NT from making laws with respect to the acquisition of property otherwise than on just terms, and section 50(A) as inserted by the *Euthanasia Laws Act 1997* (known as the "Andrews Act") which prevented the NT from enacting assisted dying legislation, the Bill seeks to ensure that the rights of the Northern Territory more closely resemble those of the States in relation to the Commonwealth government.

Closer oversight of the Territories' (NT's and ACT's) rights to self-governance may have had some justification in a by-gone era, but there is no possible reason for such paternalism in modern Australia. It is perhaps particularly ironic that Parliamentarians have denied self-determination to other Australians in the very seat of government, and I respectfully suggest that the terms of this Inquiry should be broadened to extend the scope of the Bill to the ACT so that it too has equal status with the States in the Commonwealth. Australians who live in the Territories should not be treated as second class citizens.

Moreover placing restraints on the Territories to make their own laws in relation to voluntary assisted dying may well contravene Australia's human rights obligations.

Thank you for reading my submission.

Dinny Laurence
29 August 2021