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20<sup>th</sup> August 2014

To: Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

**Submission regarding the The Medical Services (Dying with Dignity) Exposure Draft Bill**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Cathedral Branch of the Knights of the Southern Cross, Western Australia. I represent 12 professional men living in Perth. We oppose the legalisation of euthanasia, and as such we do not wish for the Medical Services Draft Bill to be passed. Our reasons are as follows:

- 1) Every person is equally precious simply in their existence. This preciousness is not lost because of suffering or terminal illness. Our society already recognises the value of the human person must be protected absolutely. We reject homicide, and acknowledging this as a basic tenet of law, civilization, equality and human rights.
- 2) Voluntary euthanasia, once legalized and socially accepted, would create subtle pressures on the aged and the sick to take this option for the sake of their friends and family, or for society as a whole.
- 3) Palliative care is increasingly able to ease the suffering of the terminally ill, and we should keep doing all we can to relieve pain, without damaging basic human values. Patients already have the right to refuse burdensome means of prolonging life; euthanasia, in which the specific intention is to cause death, is quite different.
- 4) Supporters of euthanasia appeal to the need to respect the autonomy of the patient who requests death. However, respect for autonomous choice is itself grounded on respect for the value of the person making the choice; if, by killing, we close our eyes to the value of the person, we undermine the very reason we respect autonomy in the first place.
- 5) Experience in jurisdictions overseas shows that once euthanasia has been legalised, there has been an ongoing creep in practice. This has resulted in the killing of people who did not specifically request to be killed, and who did not receive an independent psychiatric assessment prior to death. In some cases this includes children or the mentally ill, who are not well equipped to make such a decision.
- 6) The Tabling of the Bill without even using the word euthanasia would seem to be a deliberate attempt to desensitise the readers to the reality of the act of deliberate killing.
- 7) For more than a decade, Australian State and Territory governments have rejected pro-euthanasia bills on several independent occasions. This would suggest that the majority of Australians are not in support of legalising euthanasia.

We urge the committee to consider these justifications for the rejection of the Medical Services Draft Bill.

Yours Faithfully,

**Thomas Seeber**  
Acting Chairman, Cathedral Branch  
*Knights of the Southern Cross (WA) Inc.*