

Subject: Euthanasia (excerpt from media release)

Date: 16 May 1995

The practice of euthanasia as the intentional killing of one person by another can never be regarded as the compassionate answer to the burdens which may be suffered by a dying patient. It is not a private matter since it always has serious implications for all members of society. Evidence from Holland, where voluntary euthanasia is permitted under strict conditions, shows that it is quickly followed by non-voluntary euthanasia.

Christian teaching affirms the value of each individual, made in the image of God. Our lives are a gift from God. Neither our own lives nor the lives of others, are ours to take. Giving one person the power of life and death over another strikes not only at the heart of Christian teaching, but also at the obligation of the State to protect its citizens – particularly the weak and vulnerable. Additionally it places an unacceptable burden on doctors.

Attempts are being made in the Northern Territory, the A.C.T. and South Australia to legalise voluntary euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide. NSW must reject any such pressure. Dr Brendan Nelson stated recently in NSW that doctors must never be ‘sanctioned to kill.’ It may, at times, be judged necessary to withdraw or withhold certain treatments because they are considered futile or unduly burdensome. This differs radically and in a morally significant way from intentional killing.

The compassionate answer is to provide the best palliative care and medical services possible for the patients, and to give support and comfort to all those affected by the pain and suffering of their loved ones. Even in the midst of these, the Christian hope of eternal life beyond death stands firm, giving dignity and meaning to death itself.