Dear Committee Members,

We ask you to focus your enquiry's attention on improving palliative care availability for all Victorians because, according to Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins MLC in a speech to the Legislative Council on 14 April 2015, less than 50% of people who want palliative care can access it.

We also ask the committee to recommend against legalising euthanasia because ultimately this would devalue the right to life for everyone, especially the most vulnerable. Please consider that the elderly already experience financial and emotional abuse and legalised euthanasia would exacerbate this. Legal euthanasia creates the public perception that the most vulnerable people in our community may legitimately be coerced or pressured to “stop being a burden” on others or the health system. The result is that people who do not want to die will be killed; at first by ‘giving in’ to pressure from relatives and doctors and in the future completely against their will, as now occurs in countries such as Holland.

Furthermore, to co-opt the medical profession to legitimise and carry-out euthanasia is particularly disturbing. Euthanasia violates medical ethics of “first do no harm,” and upends the role of the doctor as healer and carer, pressuring him to do what is in the best interests of the hospital or health budget instead of his patient.

We therefore pray that the committee will recommend that euthanasia not be legalised, but will make many positive suggestions about how genuine palliative care can be improved.

Yours faithfully,

Helen and Kevin Harwood

Submission 317
To: Legal & Social Issues Committee,
Parliament House,
Melbourne

Dear Sirs/Madames,

We, as a family, are totally opposed to any form of euthanasia or assisted suicide. This can lead to great trauma to others close to the person involved.

As a registered nurse of many years experience, it is clear that enormous pressure will be placed on vulnerable patients not to be a burden to relatives, or indeed, the state.

Experience of overseas legalised euthanasia in Holland and Belgium, tell us that eventually any problem can be enough to justify patient killing, and it is now legal to kill one's own child.
Good palliative care is what is required, and increased access to it. Palliative care is now advanced so far, that peaceful, dignified death is ensured.

It would be a dark day if compassionate, caring palliative care is replaced for some with a cold, deliberate act of assisted killing that lays a heavy burden on others involved. It would be a sad legacy to leave future generations.

Thank you,
yours sincerely,

Mrs. Helen & Mr. Kevin Harwood