We write to request that the Legal and Social Issues Committee not recommend that voluntary euthanasia be offered as an end-of-life choice. Rather, excellent palliative care should be readily available to all those who need it. We believe that this is the truly compassionate response.

A terminally ill person may be very vulnerable, and reliant on others to advocate for them. Unfortunately, this advocacy does not always have at its heart the best interests of the dying person. Sadly, they may also feel they have a duty to die in order not to be a burden to others. However, as a community let us challenge the assumption that being a burden is unacceptable. After all, every one of us is at times a burden, sometimes an ongoing one, as in the case of serious chronic illness. Lovingly bearing each other’s burdens is one of the things that makes life worth living.

Of course, it can be argued that just because a piece of legislation may be abused, this does not mean we should not legislate. However, the outcome of an act of euthanasia is irreversible; the euthanized cannot change their minds, or speak in their own defence.

And if voluntary euthanasia is legalised in Victoria, will euthanasia remain restricted to those giving free and informed consent? In the Netherlands, it now includes categories such as disabled babies, and people with dementia and psychiatric illnesses.

Neither of us wishes to live in a State where doctors are asked to be agents of death through euthanasia. This would surely destroy the trust that should exist between doctor and patient.

We both believe that voluntary euthanasia, with the risks of abuse that accompany it, should never be made legal.

Rather than eliminating the sufferer, let us do all we can to eliminate their suffering, by providing excellent palliative care in the loving presence of devoted family, friends, nurses and doctors.

(Ms) Elena Ladd and (Mrs) Atala Ladd