

Statement of Principles for the Baptist Churches of Tasmania on End-of Life Issues

We, the Assembly of the Baptist Churches of Tasmania, believe that all life is a gift from God and that human life should be held as sacrosanct; it is not ours to take at will. Furthermore, we believe it is not in the interest of society to allow it to be taken at will.

We support the use of God-given skills, knowledge and intellects in alleviating suffering and disability through medical science.

We believe that the following principles, always guided by mercy and compassion, should be applied to the end of human life:

1. *Suicide should not be encouraged or condoned.*
2. *Active euthanasia and assisted suicide should remain illegal.*
3. *Palliative care should be encouraged and made available to those who are in the final stages of a terminal condition. This may include the administration of treatments aimed at alleviating their pain and suffering, even where these are likely to have a predictable side-effect of hastening death.*
4. *Measures designed to artificially sustain life should not be adopted where it has been determined that there is no realistic prospect for a person to gain or recover awareness and ability to relate to others.*
5. *Life support may be withdrawn once a person has reached the stage where there is no realistic prospect for them to gain or recover awareness and ability to relate to others.*
6. *Subject to the exclusion of active euthanasia and assisted suicide, the competent, informed and up-to-date wishes of the person should be the primary consideration in deciding what treatment measures will be applied in a particular situation.*
7. *Where those wishes have not been explicitly stated, or the person is incapable of exercising sound judgment or clearly expressing their wishes, the choice of appropriate treatment should be made by the next of kin, or by others properly authorised to act on the person's behalf, guided by sound medical advice. In an emergency, critical decisions may be made by medical staff pending a decision from the next of kin. In cases of doubt the decision should be to sustain life.*
8. *Provided that the dignity of the dying person and their families is respected, we affirm the value of organ donation as a generous and selfless final gift from those who feel called to take this step. Nothing in this document should be taken as precluding organ donation or transplantation.*

Endorsed by Mid-Year Assembly
Held at Longford Baptist Church
On Saturday, 7th July, 2007