



# PRESS RELEASE

## New Calls to Ban Euthanasia Book

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The sisters of a psychiatrically ill woman who travelled to Tijuana Mexico to suicide are lobbying the Federal Attorney General Robert McClelland to ban Exit International Director Dr Philip Nitschke's book *Killing Me Softly*. They claim the book contributed to the death of their sister.

Dr. Nitschke said today: "We extend our deepest sympathies to the family of Ms Berg for her tragic death and we appreciate how upset they must be. However, it should be clearly understood that we do not carry any responsibility for her death.

"Any reasonable person, having all the facts, will come to that conclusion. Firstly, I have never met or spoken with Ms Berg. Secondly, our workshops are restricted to people aged 50 years over with no psychiatric condition or who are terminally ill.

"Ms Berg was not allowed to join Exit, let alone attend a workshop, due to the professional assessment made of her by our qualified and experienced admissions nurse. Our nurse has over 10 years experience assessing people for end of life options. She assessed Erin as not suitable due to her psychiatric history".

Erin Berg travelled to Tijuana in April 2008, four months after first making contact with Exit. There it is thought that she attempted to purchase Nembutal.

It is unclear what drug or drugs she did obtain, however she subsequently died in San Diego. Erin Berg's sisters are accusing Nitschke of publishing information, which leaves the psychiatrically ill at risk of self-harm.

According to Philip Nitschke, the book in question contains no practical information which can be used by a person who wishes to suicide.

"When Penguin published *Killing Me Softly* back in 2005, their lawyers went over the book with a fine tooth comb, ensuring that this was truly a philosophical examination on the end of life choices debate. What Ms Berg's sisters are effectively saying is that books of ideas should be banned."

"While Erin's death is truly tragic" said Nitschke today, "it is not appropriate that blame be directed at Exit. Our records show we did not engage with this woman and, unfortunately, there was nothing we could do to assist her due to her psychiatric condition" he said.

"Psychiatric patients need support from the health system. Our organisation should not be held responsible when the system fails."

Exit International extends their condolences to the family of Erin Berg.

Further information: Dr Fiona Stewart 0417 398 401 or Philip Nitschke 0407-189-339