



Legalise euthanasia

Our teens debate issue in parliament

By **TRISH GALLAGHER**

FIVE Wangaratta teenagers sat in State Parliament in the school holidays intent on legalising euthanasia for the terminally ill.

They presented proposed legislation for debate as part of the 23rd YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament, with members of Dying with Dignity Victoria observing from the gallery.

And they debated so well, their bill was passed unanimously.

The bill would allow medical physicians, under strict

guidelines, to help end the life of a terminally ill person without facing criminal charges.

An eligible patient could choose to terminate their life at a time of their choice, with their chosen family and friends present.

This would result in fewer Victorians making arduous trips overseas for euthanising drugs, or from committing suicide by common means.

"By legalising euthanasia, Victoria will be creating a moral and humane option for its terminally ill citizens," the bill read.

Team member Emma MacPhee said her team's enthusiasm sprang from personal improvement goals and the desire to make a difference.

"We wished to gain experience in leadership and teamwork, and use this opportunity to learn about the Victorian Parliament and argue an issue we feel passionate about," she said.

Emma, aged 18, joined team-mates Travis Rennick, 18, Matthew Megens, 18, Scott Walsh, 17, and Kathryn White, 18, plus 90 others from across the state for the six-day residential program, delivered

by YMCA Victoria in conjunction with the Office for Youth.

Another bill passed called for greater governmental support for students needing to move away from home to attend university.

Bills passed by Youth Parliament and given the assent of the Youth Governor are passed onto the Minister for Youth Affairs for consideration.

More than 20 Youth Parliament bills, including the banning of soft drink in schools, have gone on to become Victorian legislation.



GREAT DEBATERS: Travis Rennick, Emma MacPhee and Matthew Megens spent part of the September holidays at Youth Parliament.

PHOTO: Cheryl Browne