**Media Release - ‘Me Before You’ Protests**
**For Immediate Release**

**Advocates Protest Disability Snuff Film “Me Before You”**

Australian disability rights advocates have joined with their international counterparts to protest a movie labelled by disabled people as a ‘disability hate film’, ‘Me Before You’.

Hollywood’s latest offering has sparked international outrage, with widespread protests held across the United States and United Kingdom, including at the London premiere on May 24. Australian protests have been planned in Melbourne and Perth in mid-June to coincide with the launch of the film.

“The last big example of this tired theme was *Million Dollar Baby*, which came out before the major growth of social media but still resulted in [protests covered in the New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/31/movies/groups-criticize-baby-for-message-on-suicide.html?_r=0),” said Stephen Drake, research analyst for Not Dead Yet (USA). “We can’t begin to keep track of the people and cities involved this time.”

The film, which depicts a lead character with quadriplegia who decides to commit suicide, has been blasted by disability rights writers and bloggers for its oppressive portrayal of living with significant disabilities. Disability activist Jax Jacki Brown says that the film romanticises and promotes suicide at a time when the rest of the community is actively advocating for suicide prevention.

‘It is a huge concern that this movie is promoting the message that we’re better off dead, especially for the 12,000 individuals with spinal cord injury living in Australia today,’ she said.

‘It’s not a romance. It’s a disability snuff movie.’

Writer, theatre performer, singer and disability activist, Jess Kapuscinski-Evans has the same level of spinal cord injury as Will Traynor, the lead male character in Me Before You.

‘Book and screenplay author JoJo Moyes admits she knows nothing about quadriplegics,’ said Jess. ‘The tragic figure in Me Before You is divisive and harmful. People like me are not better off dead. We are not ‘burdens’ whose best option is to commit suicide’. ‘People with disabilities need more supports and opportunities and to feel that their lives are worth living. We need to see films that show a diversity of stories by and about people with disabilities. This film does not do that. We are not better of dead then disabled. Our lives are worth living and I want the world to know this!’, Jess proclaims.

The film opens on June 16, and Melbourne disability activists will be present at the screening at the Village Cinemas, Jam Factory, 500 Chapel Street, South Yarra, at 6.30pm.

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*Further information -* [*http://bolshydivas.weebly.com/me-before-you.html*](http://bolshydivas.weebly.com/me-before-you.html)

*Mainstream media coverage -* [*Guardian*](https://www.facebook.com/theguardian/videos/518419698345798/)*,* [*Buzzfeed*](https://www.buzzfeed.com/rosebuchanan/campaigners-are-pissed-about-the-representation-of-disabled)

*Articles by international activists, including disability studies scholar* [*Bill Peace*](http://badcripple.blogspot.com/2016/05/a-second-class-existence-me-before-you.html) *and activist and filmmaker* [*Dominick Evans*](http://www.dominickevans.com/2016/02/hollywood-promotes-the-idea-it-is-better-to-be-dead-than-disabled/)*,* [*Emily Ladau’s article in Salon*](http://www.salon.com/2016/05/24/spare_me_this_tearjerker_romance_me_before_you_is_the_latest_in_an_endless_line_of_disability_objectification/)*,*[*Lauren West’s in Huffington Post*](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/laurenwest1/me-before-you_b_10143130.html)*and* [*Ben Mattlin’s in the Chicago Tribune*](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-suicide-disability-me-before-you-perspec-0601-md-20160531-story.html)*.*