

## **Admin, LACO**

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**Subject:** FW: Submission: End of Life Choices Inquiry

**From:** Anthon Souman

**Sent:** Monday, 23 October 2017 6:33 PM

**To:** Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices <[eolcc@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:eolcc@parliament.wa.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Submission: End of Life Choices Inquiry

Dear Members of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to send a submission.

I am Anthon Souman, born in the Netherlands, I lived in Canada for fourteen years and now I live in Western Australia.

For more than 25 years now I have served and am still serving as a minister and pastor in churches in these three countries and have been in contact with many of those who were terminally ill and dying.

Both in the Netherlands as well as in Canada I have witnessed the legalization of euthanasia and also the result it had on the people of those countries.

I believe it must be a basic principle in our society that we don't take any life of those who are weak, struggling, suffering, but that we do what we can to assist them, care for them and show them love.

Often a desire to die is the result of pressure from those surrounding the one who is suffering. Often, people who express such a wish come to that because they feel they are a burden to others, to family, to hospitals, to doctors.

I have witnessed in the Netherlands how people, when getting older and sick, out of fear to be pressed into requesting euthanasia, move close to hospitals and nursing homes where they know they will be safe. These were relatives of mine, as well as friends.

My father died from cancer after suffering for two years. He received good palliative care and was loved by those around him. Those last weeks before he died were precious. We are all thankful that he and we received that time.

I have more relatives and friends who died after a time of suffering. They were loved by their family, received good palliative care and there was no desire for euthanasia.

However, that situation changed after euthanasia was legalized. Once doctors, hospitals or others start talking about the possibility of euthanasia to those who are terminally ill, it created a lot of uncertainty, fear and depression. It may be expected also here that, even though euthanasia is not mentioned explicitly to them as a possibility, people who are in such a situation will feel or even imagine pressure to request euthanasia. By allowing or promoting euthanasia, a society gives a signal to those people that they are not needed anymore.

The experience from the Netherlands also shows that, once euthanasia is legalized, it doesn't end the discussion. There continues to be a constant push to include other groups of (non-terminally) ill people and

even people who cannot speak for themselves, as being allowed to be killed under this law. Over the past few years stories emerged from the Netherlands of what is happening now, about which it was said in the time that euthanasia was legalized, that it would never happen and those who warned, were accused of fearmongering. Now they have been proven right, but nobody cares anymore. What is next?

I am convinced that we need to maintain the basic principle of respect for human life, also when it is weak, struggling and sick.

Therefore, I strongly recommend that the committee do everything in its power to prevent legalized euthanasia, and support palliative care, so that people do not feel the need to end their life.

Yours sincerely,

Anthon Souman