

VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA SUBMISSION

My name is Chris Baker. I am an 85 year old retired nurse and am writing a submission in support of the Voluntary Euthanasia Bill because I would like to see it pass the debate when it comes before the Parliament. My reasons are :

(a) over a forty year career in nursing I saw enough horrible ends of life to be convinced that people should have an option to choose when and how they die. I certainly had lots of requests from patients to end their lives.

(b) at my age I want to know there is a way out if something dreadful befalls me.

A personal story to support my argument.

My sister aged 70 suffered a stroke which left her with a paralysed right arm and leg and damaged an area of the brain that affected her decision making so rehabilitation was not an option. She became totally dependent and when caring for her at home became too much for her 85 year old husband she was admitted to the local nursing home where she finally had another stroke and died aged 83.

What was her life like? She was in a share room, usually with an uncommunicative lady , (not always the same one) who slept most of the time which suited Fran who could pretend she was not there. She only sat out of bed for short periods when family from out of town visited because of discomfort in the wheel chair. Her husband visited alternate days, daughter and grandchildren sometimes and Mandurah based siblings when we could. She had a good rapport with most of the frequently changing staff and they were very good to her. She really enjoyed listening to the radio but adamantly refused to participate in any activities, could not see to read and had difficulty watching TV. Her one desire was to die and get out of there.

This is a story anybody who has worked in a nursing home or has elderly relatives would be all too familiar with. I think we need to realise that terrible as it is chronic pain is not the only type of suffering.

This lady was an independent self –supporting person who before marriage travelled and worked interstate, worked hard as a farmer’s wife and raised three children. Moving into town she worked until her mid-60s, holidays were spent travelling with their caravan even going interstate to pick grapes because they enjoyed it. Not the sort of person to relish spending ten years languishing in a nursing home.

Please Members of Parliament can enough of you find it in your hearts to vote to pass this Legislation so some of us can anticipate a better end?