

To the Chair and Members of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices,

As a resident of Western Australia, I am writing to express my concern about the possibility of assisted suicide and/or euthanasia becoming legalised in our state.

It is worth considering on what basis a decision of life and death is made. Is it right to allow fickle human standards, changeable as they are, to be the basis?  
Human thinking is notoriously subjective.

The Lord God is Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in it. He made everything and still upholds all of it. He is also the Creator of new life. He decides who lives and dies and when they do.

Sure we are allowed to treat people and make them comfortable and ease their pain where and when we can. But life and death should remain in the hand of Him Who made human beings.

A real life example I want to share with you.

Some years ago a young man in his high teens suffered of severe form of Crohns disease.

After a longer period in hospital his health had diminished to the point of death several times. Doctors three times called in the parents and family, strongly suggesting his life support be turned off. Since his parents honoured God by not taking his life or death into their own hands, they refused to turn off the life support.

The young man recovered fully in the next few years. He ended up marrying and living a normal life (except that the chemical treatment he received caused sterilisation)

Naturally his story is an exceptional one but it is a real one. No amount of safeguards can be put in place to overcome such scenario's. As clever as doctors think they can be, they are limited and should not advise patients on life and death decisions.

Needless to say, neither should patients make those decisions.

Please understand well the compassion we have for those suffering from sicknesses, both curable and incurable. It is unpleasant to experience and watch. Nevertheless we should safeguard against our own human fickleness.

Palliative care providers across Australia are united in their opposition to euthanasia and assisted suicide as a means of 'treatment' for chronic or terminal illness. With good palliative care, pain and other symptoms can be effectively managed, so that "if you provide the right palliative care urgently, effectively and confidently, you don't have to have the sorts of deaths that proponents of this legislation are suggesting you can't avoid" (Former AMA Victoria presidents urge MPs to reject euthanasia legislation, abc.net.au, 19/09/2017)

Euthanasia and assisted suicide is a dangerous option for vulnerable people. Many elderly, disabled and chronically ill people already feel they are a 'burden' on their family and marginalised by society. Rather than affirming the value of every person to our society, even presenting the legal option of physician assisted death for frail and dependent people further embeds the idea that they are 'better off dead' and their lives not worth living.

Legalising assisted suicide and euthanasia sends a confusing message about suicide prevention. As a society, we are actively committing ourselves to reducing the tragedy of suicide – except, it seems, for those who are old and unwell. This is an inexcusable double standard. Furthermore, data from the US shows that the legalisation of assisted suicide is actually linked to an increase in the overall suicide rate, and a massive 14.5% rise of suicides among over 65s (D Jones and D Paton (2015), How does legalization of physician assisted suicide affect rates of suicide? Southern Medical Journal, 180 (10), pp. 599-604).

Instead, we need greater awareness of and resources for palliative care services, so that all people can access the medical, pastoral and spiritual care they need at the end of their life. This is the only truly humane and dignified response.

Humbly submitted by  
Willem and Ann Amoraal