

Attention: Principal Research Officer
Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

WHY SAFEGUARDS WILL NOT WORK

To the Members of Parliament.

I urge our parliament to say no to euthanasia.

Please consider these points:

- 1) Elderly and disabled people are extremely susceptible to the suggestions of others due to their physically vulnerable state in life and their dependance on other people for everything. Quite often they are also somewhat depressed, particularly in the early stages of entering full-time care.
- 2) Relatives who might not even wish to encourage their elderly or disabled relations to euthanase themselves may not even need to say anything overt to cause this to happen; it may be enough to simply suggest that the school fees are expensive and it is costing a lot to keep the elderly/disabled in that home. In their depressed state, the disabled and elderly may be all too willing to believe they are useless and discardable. A decision may be taken that might have been regretted later on, if medical treatment for depression and family counseling had been given instead of 'the green needle.'
- 3) Quadraplegic people in particular are usually suicidal for about a year after their accidents - during this period a decision to euthanase oneself might be taken that, had the person waited longer, they probably would not take.
- 4) The Hippocratic Oath that doctors have taken throughout the centuries has precluded killing patients: *I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrong-doing. Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest*

such a course. Getting doctors to help people kill themselves will harm the doctors' consciences, in the long run, because their job is to heal and not to harm.

- 5) A doctor who is willing to encourage their patients to harm themselves is not the kind of doctor I would ever wish to have treating me, since I could never trust them not to encourage me to dispatch myself if I was depressed.

I urge the parliament to reject any attempt to legalise euthanasia. Existing palliative care is preferable. The argument that a terminal illness ought to be sufficient justification for euthanasia is a bad argument - physicians and nurses of terminal patients consider the comfort of the patient to be the main consideration and will give pain-killers far beyond the amount that might kill someone in that situation - which is not euthanasia, as the intention is to kill the pain, not the patient.

Legalising the intention to kill someone and/or the intention to help someone else to kill themselves is a very bad thing. Please do not do this. If you do, you will be lessening the value of human life, something you yourselves may eventually regret when you are old and vulnerable.

Andrew P Partington

Reasons why you should listen to my opinion on this subject:

- 1) For many years I worked as a volunteer with disabled people and visited those in aged care. I have also watched friends and relations go through palliative care and been with them as they were dying.*
- 2) I have experienced depression and understand that a person may be miserable enough to die at a particular time, then find later on that life is worthwhile.*
- 3) I am a writer and have spent many years trying to understand how human interactions work, particularly, how they go wrong.*
- 4) I am very familiar with family dynamics, as I work part-time as a music teacher usually with parents present at lessons, and quite often get to know families extremely well in this capacity.*