

From:-

Claire Patten

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To:-

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

I strongly believe that people of sound mind should be able make choices regarding the end of life, particularly when their health is compromised. These choices should be able to be made in advance and then adhered to by the family and the medical practitioners.

My personal experiences with friends and loved ones has strengthened my beliefs. I remember clearly I was 8, our family visited an uncle. His mother- in- law resided with them. She was bed ridden and all day every day she lay in bed, calling out, "Lord, Please take me". She lasted in that state for 24 years living to age 102, a horrifically demoralising and soul destroying way to live and a complete drain on all the family. The memory of an example of old age has been with me for the rest of my life.

My 62 Son-in-Law had brain surgery to remove a very large (AVM) Arterial-Venous Malformation. It was incapacitating and compromising him physically and cognitively every 6 – 12 months. His options were to watch himself slowly degenerate with each bleed or to risk surgery. While complex surgery, he **chose** surgery knowing he could end up left side paralysed, and left field of vision compromised or die on the table. He felt he could live with that while he couldn't live with the pathway of no action. Something went wrong at the end of surgery, and he is now a vegetable. He cannot walk, he cannot go to the toilet, he cannot hold a conversation, he cannot read, he cannot shower or wash himself; he cannot take part in exercise. He can think and understand all that is said, but cannot react at let his feelings known when carers hurt him or are disrespectful. He was **very specific about his life choices** prior to surgery and was **very clear that death was preferable to his current state**. He has lived like this for 8 years now. With his 96 year old mother still living in her own home, longevity is probably on his side. Despite his wishes, death appears an eternity away for him. As he is in this state he is unable to make his life choices and is destined to years more living as a vegetable. This is soul destroying for his wife, his children and his mother. **While his wishes were very clear to his wife, his family, his surgeons and the rehabilitation team prior to surgery, these wishes cannot be carried out and he is trapped.**

I, myself, am aging and live in a retirement village. Like other residents, we are conscious of the aging symptoms, and constant fear of health deterioration. Is our life meant to be ruled by fear of draconian laws that were possibly more applicable when they were first introduced? Before technology developed and empowered medical staff to use invasive methods to prolong life way past what would have been the natural case. Legislation needs to change to allow elderly and severely compromised people choices in their final years and days.

For these reasons I believe that it is time for Legislation to be changed to reflect the choices that many people wish to be able to make to ensure their passing is a period of time without undue suffering and with dignity and is not prolonged unreasonably.

Claire Patten