

*Natalie Matthews and Friends (listed at end)*

This submission to the **Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices** is on behalf of myself and the listed friends (many of whom are seniors), who have read and wholeheartedly agreed with this submission.

We will not be available to appear before the Joint Committee.

***Definitions***

*Euthanasia* (E) (Gk. 'good death') refers to a situation where an agent, at the request of a person experiencing terminal suffering, facilitates the sufferer's quick death.

*Physician Assisted Suicide* (PAS) refers to a situation where a physician, at the request of a person experiencing terminal suffering, supplies the means for the sufferer to end their own life.

***Risks of ELDER ABUSE***

If human beings were perfectly wise and moral, PAS/E would only occur when the sufferer was judged able to make a well-considered decision and the agent was medically qualified to ensure minimum pain in dying. Unfortunately, these decisions are fraught with risks of misjudgment by both sufferer and agent, or at worst malicious intervention on the part of a relative or other agency, such as the State.

I have worked in Aged Care in voluntary and paid positions for several decades. I have an understanding of elder abuse, what it is and how to report it. As is commonly seen, much elder abuse starts in the family, amongst relatives or friends.

Just when older persons need extra love and support in their final years of life, they may be made to feel unwanted burdens, with a duty to die. The more readily death is available by end of life choices, the more elderly people there will be who are pressured to die for the wrong reasons. Reasons I have often come across in my research include: being coerced to give up the family home to relatives, timing death to fit in with relatives' holidays, to save the financial cost of medical treatment and to not waste the inheritance. In addition, thousands of people across the globe are assisted to suicide/euthanased; frequently ***without their permission***.<sup>1</sup> Many of them are seniors, and let's face it, this form of euthanasia, commonly

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3120835/Belgian-GPs-killing-patients-not-asked-die-Report-says-thousands-killed-despite-not-asking-doctor.html>

called “involuntary euthanasia” is not acceptable or ethical. The elderly spend more time in hospitals and nursing homes than anybody else. They need to be able to trust their physicians to heal them, not to be scared that a doctor or nurse might euthanase them against their wishes.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Effects of State-sanctioned PAS***

Several countries have legislated to allow PAS/E. The ‘safeguards’ that have been set in place often fail or are by-passed.<sup>3</sup> For example:

- Nurses administering euthanasia, where this is not legal. (Belgium).<sup>4</sup>
- Hospital patients never asking for euthanasia or having a discussion about it being euthanased. (Netherlands, Belgium)<sup>5</sup>.
- Euthanasia is administered to patients judged to be incompetent. – such as dementia patients (tolerated in Netherlands) and depressed/psychiatric patients (California, Oregon, Belgium, etc.)
- People can be euthanased or assisted to suicide and although the reasons for doing so are not in line with the relevant legislation there is little or no accountability for the medical staff involved.

In short, Euthanasia is not safe and no amount of well-meaning safeguards work. It is our elderly who will suffer the most. We must protect them, and at this time refuse to endorse Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide.

### **FRIENDS WHO ENDORSE THIS SUBMISSION**

Bruce Okely,

Alice Okely

Phillip Matthews

Asha Thivy

Brian Hill

Margaret Hill

Alison Hill

Cheryl Carter

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<sup>2</sup> The Pro-Life Infonet.(1999). Involuntary euthanasia is out of control in Holland. Retrieved from <http://www.euthanasia.com/holland99.html>

<sup>3</sup> Pereira, J. (2011). Legalizing euthanasia or assisted suicide: the illusion of safeguards and controls. *Current Oncology*, 18 (2), 38-45.

<sup>4</sup> Inghelbrecht, E., Bilsen, J., Mortier, F., & Deliens, L. (2010). The role of nurses in physician-assisted deaths in Belgium. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 905-910.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cmaj.ca/content/182/9/895.full?sid=e6eda993-bbf6-4ed8-b586-4812b01f8cfa>

**FRIENDS** continued.

Grace Phillips

Michael Phillips

Faye Gabrielson

Patrick Anthony

Doreen Price

Lu-Lu Naw Junia

Elizabeth Mabone