

To the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices

I wish to make some comments on the right for the average citizen to have a right to choose to end their life.

My opinion is that of an older person reflecting on the choices I would wish to have available to me. I feel religious beliefs should have no bearing on the decision of the state in this matter. It would be wrong for a person without such beliefs to have their decisions limited because of another section of society's belief system.

I am nearly seventy- nine years of age in very good health. While I remain in good health and able to live independently I expect to be content with my life.

My greatest concern is that if anything should happen which meant I could not live independently that I would have to go into a nursing home. My feelings at the moment are that I would rather be dead than live somewhere like that even if it was a good home – and many of them aren't.- or are deadly dull.

My mother died at 102 after spending about ten years in a nursing home - not allowed to walk , with her drinks thickened (so she wouldn't choke!!) – a form of torture in my eyes. The curtains in the day lounge were drawn so she couldn't even watch the comings and goings in the carpark. The TV blared away on some mindless station. Her hearing aids and other items were lost on several occasions. However it was basically a reasonable institution as such places go.

I think with a growing aged population the situation in nursing homes will become worse not better. I would like the right to choose to die rather than go into an institution.

It could be that at the end I would not make this choice but I would like to feel the choice is always available. I think if, like in Victoria, you have to have a terminal illness, this could preclude people like me. My determination at the moment is to obtain the means to kill myself if it is not lawfully available to me. I think this would be sad to be pushed to this extreme as it means I can't choose to have people with me if I, and they, want to be present.

Also if I have to kill myself I would be worried someone might interrupt me – or be shocked when finding my body.

There are other scenarios that appear more complicated than my case and I don't wish to comment on them. I think especially if someone has had a good life – maybe up to seventy - they should have the right to decide for themselves if they have had enough of life.

I believe experiences overseas have shown people do not rush this option. People become more prepared to continue with their life when they know that they always have the choice if circumstances become too depressing/uncomfortable for them.

I would expect this option to operate with the level of oversight which has been proven to work in countries which already have a system of assisted dying.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sally Wylie

5 October 2017