



12/10/2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

It has come to my attention that the Western Australian government, soon after being elected, announced that it would enquire into "end of life choices." I would therefore like to tell you about the end of life choices that I was forced to make with regards to both of my parents. My father had cancer of a lung and as a result had a lobe of the lung removed. He was cured. Fifteen years later he developed cancer in the other lung. When the time came that Dad was struggling to breathe, even though he was on oxygen, he asked for the ambulance to be called to take him to hospital.

When I received a phone call to tell me that Dad was dying, my husband and I immediately rushed to Geraldton to see him before he died. When we arrived, we noticed that Dad was showing symptoms of severe dehydration, and there was no water on his bedside table. I asked the nurse for water because my father was thirsty, but I was told that the doctor had ordered that no water was to be given to him. My husband and I went to search for the doctor and we warned him that if my father died of dehydration there was going to be much trouble for him from the family.

My husband set up a roster for the family to stay with Dad and to ask him, each time he gained consciousness, if he wanted a drink. My husband then took water with him and sat by his bed overnight to do the first shift. By morning Dad had recovered and he sat up and asked for breakfast. He was discharged and my husband and I returned home to Perth.

One day, when Dad was walking along a street in Geraldton, he was stopped by a man who recognized him. The man said he was the ambulance driver who drove Dad to hospital. He also said the doctor had told him that my father was going to die that day. My father lived for another year after the doctor had decided to end his life, and he told my mother that he was glad for having that extra year of life because he had things on his mind that he needed to sort out. He didn't say what he was speaking about, but I do know that he was agnostic and my mother told me that during that year he bought himself a Bible.

Regardless of what was on my father's mind, the point is that the doctor's responsibility is to save life, where possible, and to provide palliative care in cases of terminal illness. The government's responsibility is to make laws to protect the lives of its citizens.

Years later, when my mother was dying of an asbestos related disease, she developed pneumonia. While in hospital she was transferred from a hospital room for two patients into a single bed room. A doctor told me that Mum had requested that she be resuscitated if she died. I questioned my mother about this and she said the hospital had transferred my father into a single bed room before the doctor tried to kill him and now they were doing the same to her. Of course, this was not correct, but how could my 87 year old mother know this when she no longer trusted doctors.

Mum confirmed that of course she didn't want to be restored to life so that she would have to die again. She wanted to go home to die because she didn't want the doctors to kill her.

I explained to the doctor that my mother didn't fear death, she feared the doctors because of what happened to my father. I then had to sign papers to allow my mother to die without being resuscitated.

It was so difficult to hear her calling for her daughter because she was no longer able to trust the doctors as those who save life, but to fear them as those who take life. It was not possible for me to take her home but I stayed with her while she was dying so that she could die in peace.

I know it is not difficult to argue about why this shouldn't have happened or why it won't happen again, but it did happen and it will happen. No daughter should have to cope with seeing her elderly mother thinking she has been handed over to someone to kill her, even though that was not the case.

We must have doctors that we can trust with our lives and such trust will be changed to fear when the role of doctors is to end life as well as save life. I very strongly protest the taking of human life by any person. No person has a God given right to kill another person and, therefore, neither does any government have the right to legalize it. No grieving family member should have to live with the consequences of such government decisions. If the government, whose first responsibility is to protect its citizens, is trying to legalize euthanasia, and without even consulting its citizens, that is reprehensible.

My email address is if you need further details.

Yours Faithfully,

Elizabeth Bartell