

Admin, LACO

Subject: FW: Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into End of Life Choices

From: Lachlan Mills

Sent: Thursday, 26 October 2017 7:54 AM

To: Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices <eolcc@parliament.wa.gov.au>

Subject: Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into End of Life Choices

To The Committee

As a resident of Western Australia, I would like to offer my personal opinion on the matter before the Committee. I have no direct experience with end-of-life assisted dying, but I have read and heard many personal experiences from other Australians who have. I strongly believe that Western Australia should offer its residents the right to choose the manner and timing of their death, when they are suffering a terminal illness.

Modern secular society has come to a broad acceptance about the rights of individuals to make these choices, unhindered by the State, and without the threat of legal sanction. Countries in Europe, states in the USA have all passed forms of legislation allowing these choices. The consequences of these laws has been to reduce the suffering of people facing death, and of their loved ones, in a dignified and controlled manner. Western Australians deserve these options as well.

The right to die when faced with unbearable suffering is fundamental. A dignified and painless method of death should not be denied to a person simply because of State law. I remember the case of Christian Rossiter in 2009, who was prepared to starve himself to death in order to end his unbearable pain and suffering. He had to go to great lengths and costs to ensure his right to die by refusing medical treatment, and in the end, the Supreme Court agreed that he had that right. Given that Western Australians can make this same decision even now, it seems entirely unreasonable that they cannot be offered a much more dignified and painless method of medically assisted death instead.

The fear that end-of-life assisted dying laws that allow people to end their lives to avoid unbearable pain and suffering will also allow people to end their lives solely based on the thought that they are a burden to others is a nonsense. If someone passes the threshold test - of imminent death with unbearable pain and suffering - then they should be allowed to choose the manner and timing of their death irrespective of any other thoughts about the implications of their life or death that they may have. I am not suggesting that a person should be allowed a medically assisted death *only* because they feel that they have become a burden to others, but I am suggesting that having such a thought should not deny a person their right to die should they pass all the other tests.

Society should not fear passing clear and unambiguous laws relating to difficult issues involving life and death. Prior to laws in Western Australia that gave women the clear right to abortions, not only did abortions still happen in great number, but countless medical complications, injuries, deaths, and prosecutions occurred as a consequence. Laws that allowed medical abortions have reduced all of these negative outcomes. In the same way, laws that allow medically assisted dying will reduce unnecessary suffering, dangerous or illegal acts by people who are simply trying to exercise a fundamental act of personal control over their lives.

In summary: I wholeheartedly support laws to allow end-of-life medically assisted dying.

Lachlan Mills