

Admin, LACO

Subject: FW: Submission regarding End-of-Life Care

From:

Sent: Friday, 24 November 2017 2:26 PM

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

Cc:

Subject: Submission regarding End-of-Life Care

Hello,

I am requesting an extension of time to make a submission to your committee regarding management of people with terminal illness, at the end of their life.

My name is William Philip. I am 71 years old, a qualified Social Worker with 33 years practice, including work as a nursing home proprietor, a grief counsellor and a rehabilitation counsellor, and was a committee member of The Compassionate friends for several years.

My late wife, Dorothy Maxine Philip died on January 7 2017, after an illness of 3 years post diagnosis, at the age of 81. Maxine worked in senior nursing positions including Charge sister at RPH and Shenton Park Annexe, Director of Nursing at Rowethorpe Nursing centre. When she received her diagnosis of an inoperable duodenal adenoma, in March 2014, she was well aware of the potentially horrible death which awaited her, and made a very serious attempt to kill herself a few weeks after diagnosis, having put all her affairs in order.

She survived, and after the police and mental health services had made thorough investigation into this attempt, decided that she would not make another attempt.

By August 2016 Maxine was becoming very unwell, and had a period of most uncomfortable hospitalisation at the end of August. From then her condition steadily diminished, and we nursed her at home, with wonderful assistance from the Palliative Care service. From mid-November, she was completely bedfast, using an in-dwelling catheter, completely incontinent, and terrified.

She was fitted with a sub-cutaneous perfusion apparatus just after Christmas, which managed her pain levels better than oral meds. They did not reduce her terror, as she effectively drowned as her lungs gradually failed and became fluid filled. Her death was horrible.

I believe that she should have been able to nominate while still totally aware, that her wishes to be assisted to die before the terrifying last stages were entered, to have been legally available.

I do not advocate the widespread use of suicide as being relevant to all older people. But I hope that all those who oppose assisted death by choice do not have the same terror and indignity in death as my wife suffered. We are a society that will prosecute a dog-owner who does not alleviate the suffering of a mortally ill pet, while preventing any reduction in the suffering of a loved human. The recently debated legislation in Victoria seems to shine a light on the way forward for Western Australia.

Palliative care is a wonderful and humane service, but it does not, and cannot, help in extreme circumstances such as Maxine's.

I am happy to appear before your committee to answer any questions or provide any further information. The work of your committee is of paramount importance to people alive now who will face the same ordeal as Maxine, if there is no measured and sensible change to current laws.

William Philip JP

24/11/2017