

Admin, LACO

Subject: FW: Medically Assisted Dying with Dignity

From: Peta Quinlivan

Sent: Friday, 20 October 2017 9:06 AM

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

Subject: Re: Medically Assisted Dying with Dignity

Peta Quinlivan

Dear Members of The Joint Select Committee of End of Life Choices

I strongly believe that there is a need for laws in Western Australia to allow citizens to make informed decisions regarding their own end of life choices; ideally one of the choices would include legalised medical assistance to ensure a more hasty and dignified death to those who are suffering. My belief in the need for changes in the law is strengthened by my late husband's end of life experiences.

Just twelve days before his passing, on the day before his admittance to the hospice, my husband appointed me to be his enduring guardian, in accordance with the "Guardianship and Administration Act 1990 Part A". The "Enduring Power of Guardianship and Acceptance of Enduring Power of Guardianship" document had been prepared by a lawyer and was brought to our home to be signed by my husband, witnesses and me. At that stage of his illness (a rare type of neuroendocrine lung cancer, which ravaged his body to the point where it metastasised into his spine, ribs, shoulders and femur); my husband was barely able to move; and wasn't eating. I had taken time off work to care for him at home since his diagnosis three months earlier.

My husband wanted to die but didn't want to suffer. Numerous times he had expressed to me, "If I was a dog, I would've been put down by now."

Despite the palliative care received in hospice by doctors, nurses and volunteers; my husband suffered terribly....and as his enduring guardian, constantly beside him all day and all night, I suffered too. Due to no fault of

their own, not all of the nursing staff caring for my husband were palliative trained, and at times, this became an added stress.

My husband had no chance of any quality of life at all whilst in the final weeks of his life. Even the most simple pleasures of being able to look out of the hospice window at the blue sky, see the beautiful waters of the bay or be comforted by me, his wife, were robbed from him.

Two years after his passing I am still traumatised by what he endured; especially the sounds of his suffering throughout the long, frightening nights when the effects of morphine began to wear off and my husband required "breakthrough" painkillers. Although he couldn't speak I knew when he was in pain.

Hospices are a wonderful asset in our society but without legalised medical assistance, to enable patients to die with dignity, there will continue to be unnecessary pain and suffering.

Everyday I look at the site in the garden where Teddy, our much loved little Tibetan terrier, is laid to rest. Thank goodness Teddy was able to be euthanised when he began to suffer at fifteen years of age. It was the humane thing to do...

Peta Quinlivan