

18 October 2017

Ms. Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA

Chair of Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices



Dear Ms Sanderson,

I am responding to your invitation to lodge my submission on the need for a proper law regarding end of life choices in WA. It is an issue close to my heart.

I am 76, Dutch by birth, Australian by choice. I live on my own in a retirement village in Perth. I am reasonably healthy, but I worry, as so many seniors do, about my future.

Diagnosed with MCI (Mild Cognitive Impairment), I am experiencing unusual lapses of memory and cognitive ability. It means that I am likely to eventually suffer from dementia. I am also prone to skin cancer, which is an inherited affliction. Both my grandmother and mother suffered from this insidious decease.

I was witness to my mother's death, which was a tragic experience. She endured two months of hospitalisation, two weeks of palliative care, and then it took a long three days for her to die. At this stage she was a pitiful skeleton, not recognising her children and without any good feeling of being. She had repeatedly pleaded to be helped to die. A wish ignored.

This happened in the Netherlands before the current humane VE law was enacted in 2002. Now she would have had access to information and a choice to die with dignity. Isn't this what we want to have in WA?

We accept that anyone can make important decisions during their lifetime, even those that may affect others. We decide on, and hopefully take responsibility for, every aspect of it. Why can we not be in control at the end - in my view the most important stage in our life?

They say that life is precious. But this is a subjective view. Life is precious only when it has value to its bearer. And that should be the question asked.

I believe that we need a clear, safeguarded law, which will protect doctors who genuinely want to help their patients be relieved of their suffering. If nothing is done, nothing will change: wishes will continue to be ignored.

Thank you for considering my submission.

I will be pleased to be of assistance in any way I can.

Your sincerely,

Ms Tina Christensen

