

WA Parliamentary Inquiry

Maria Dijkstra

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on End of Life Choices

RE: DEFENCE OF HUMAN LIFE

I understand this committee is set up to inquire and report on the need for laws in Western Australia to allow citizens to make informed choices regarding ending their own life. My letter is to inform you that I definitely do not support the legalisation of euthanasia in WA.

In reference to “terms of reference” (a):

I was a Registered Nurse before having children, and my role included the care of palliative patients. The large majority of clients did not want to end their own life, feeling that their time was up when their time was up and this was not something that they wanted to meddle with. My experience was that it was more the family that felt sorry for them and felt that it would be kinder to shorten their life due to pain or discomfort; while the patient felt that with effective pain relief their discomfort was managed well enough for them to not need to actively end their life.

The current practice of pain relief, particularly with the use morphine, when a patient is nearing the foreseeable conclusion of life is such that pain is mostly able to be managed well, partly as those prescribing dosage are not as encumbered by time and dosage restrictions, as the focus is on comfort and a dignified ending to life.

In reference to “terms of reference” (d):

I was privileged to be the Enduring Power of Attorney as well as Enduring Power of Guardianship for my uncle when he was terminally ill. He particularly wanted this to be a legal, documented form as he was concerned his estranged wife would be able to control his finances and health decisions if this was not enacted on. In this way I was able to protect and advocate his interests and what would happen to him in case he was not able to make his own informed choices. He verbalised many times that he was so thankful euthanasia was not legal here because of his personal situation with his wife. I am therefore concerned of other situations in the future if euthanasia were to be legalised. Particularly if someone had an accident where they were unable to inform others of their decisions.

In conclusion, ending one’s life is such a final decision and act, one which there is no coming back from. Although my uncle suffered towards the end, he never wanted to be instrumental in ending his own life, and was very appreciative of the current technological abilities and medication to ensure comfort till the very end.

So please, committee, do not recommend the legalisation of euthanasia and assisted-suicide. Wishing you all the very best in your decision making.

Kind Regards

Maria Dijkstra