

Admin, LACO

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

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From: Emily McKenna

Sent: Thursday, 12 October 2017 6:25 PM

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 Chair and Members of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices,

As a resident of Western Australia, I am writing to express my concern about the possibility of assisted suicide and/or euthanasia becoming legalised in our state. The reality is that physician assisted death is both unnecessary, and unsafe.

Palliative care providers across Australia are united in their opposition to euthanasia and assisted suicide as a means of 'treatment' for chronic or terminal illness. With good palliative care, pain and other symptoms can be effectively managed, so that "if you provide the right palliative care urgently, effectively and confidently, you don't have to have the sorts of deaths that proponents of this legislation are suggesting you can't avoid" (Former AMA Victoria presidents urge MPs to reject euthanasia legislation, abc.net.au, 19/09/2017)

Euthanasia and assisted suicide is a dangerous option for vulnerable people. Many elderly, disabled and chronically ill people already feel they are a 'burden' on their family and marginalised by society. Rather than affirming the value of every person to our society, even presenting the legal option of physician assisted death for frail and dependent people further embeds the idea that they are 'better off dead' and their lives not worth living.

Legalising assisted suicide and euthanasia sends a confusing message about suicide prevention. As a society, we are actively committing ourselves to reducing the tragedy of suicide – except, it seems, for those who are old and unwell. This is an inexcusable double standard. Furthermore, data from the US shows that the legalisation of assisted suicide is actually linked to an increase in the overall suicide rate, and a massive 14.5% rise of suicides among over 65s (D Jones and D Paton (2015), How does legalization of physician assisted suicide affect rates of suicide? Southern Medical Journal, 180 (10), pp. 599-604).

Instead, we need greater awareness of and resources for palliative care services, so that all people can access the medical, pastoral and spiritual care they need at the end of their life. This is the only truly humane and dignified response.

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Emily McKenna