

Peter Walkemeyer

10 October 2017

Attention: Principal Research Officer
Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

By email: eolcc@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

WA End of Life Enquiry - Euthanasia

I make the following submission in relation to the WA End of Life Enquiry. I understand the terms of reference for the enquiry are:

- (a) assess the practices currently being utilised within the medical community to assist a person to exercise their preferences for the way they want to manage their end of life when experiencing chronic and/or terminal illnesses, including the role of palliative care;
- (b) review the current framework of legislation, proposed legislation and other relevant reports and materials in other Australian States and Territories and overseas jurisdictions;
- (c) consider what type of legislative change may be required, including an examination of any federal laws that may impact such legislation; and
- (d) examine the role of Advanced Health Directives, Enduring Power of Attorney and Enduring Power of Guardianship laws and the implications for individuals covered by these instruments in any proposed legislation.

My initial concern is that the terms of reference indicate a push to legalise euthanasia rather than provide an objective framework within which the options can be discussed and evaluated. The current terms of reference do not contemplate an option of keeping the law as it currently stands, nor do they contemplate the value of human life and its sanctity under God.

From a Christian perspective: Increasingly we find legislators and government placing themselves above God, denying God's existence and using this as a licence to enact laws that contravene the law of God. It must be said that ignorance of God and His law including wilful rejection of God and His law will not prevent the consequences of such actions from occurring. One must realise that God is not 'progressive' or 'tolerant'. He never changes, and He has a narrow view of things because He can afford to be narrow. He is right. When we enact new law to be progressive and tolerant we slander God and His Word if those laws contravene His law. Through our progressive and tolerant agendas, we alienate ourselves from God and deny ourselves His protection and grace.

In considering any changes to the law, the Hippocratic Oath that has guided doctors for over 2000 years must be considered. This oath states: "I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrong-doing. Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course." Progressive agendas are not always good or useful agendas. This oath has served the medical community well for a long time. It would be invalid should euthanasia become legal.

Once legalised, any 'narrow' restrictions on state-sanctioned killing quickly fades. In Belgium it is now routine to euthanise the mentally ill and there are now protocols for children. It is impossible to build adequate safeguards into legislation to prevent these thing from occurring. The old saying give an inch, take a mile is relevant when legislating. Time and time again government has legislated with good intentions only to find that they have opened a door to a cavern of unintended and profoundly negative consequences that were not foreseen when the legislation was passed. Government typically move far too quickly with this type of legislation and far too slowly with other more important legislation.

The AMA has a position statement on euthanasia and assisted suicide. This statement does not favour such measures. Any legislation to enable these measures will violate the AMA position statement and the values and beliefs of many doctors.

In Oregon, more than 50 per cent of those who are assisted to suicide in speak of their concern of being a burden to family and friends. This statistic itself indicates that psychological issues need to be addressed in patients considering end of life options. It is unlikely that any legislation will provide adequate safeguards should it move to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide.

There is a wide body of research around the world from nations and states that have legalised euthanasia and assisted suicide. Most if not all this genuine research illustrates the profoundly negative outcomes that legalising euthanasia and assisted suicide delivers.

I urge the Government to cease any attempt to alter our current law. I urge the Government to recognise that any attempt to modify or alter the law to move towards euthanasia and assisted suicide will have profoundly negative long-term effects on our community, families and State. Many of these effects will be unknown and not recognised for many years. Such is the danger of introducing such legislation.

Yours faithfully

Peter Walkemeyer