

Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices

From: Anthony Nichols
Sent: Thursday, 7 September 2017 9:29 PM
To: Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices
Subject: Submission to Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices

Categories: Agenda item, Submission received

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council,

With regard to your consideration of current "End of Life Choices" and changes needed, I wish to oppose any provision for "voluntary Euthanasia" on both pragmatic and principled grounds.

May I emphasise that I do not impugn the motives of those who believe that such provision would mitigate much suffering. But I believe they are wrong for the following reasons:

1. The most carefully regulated provision would still send the message that suicide is socially acceptable (at a time when we face an epidemic of youth suicide).
2. The financial pressure of palliative care may influence some patients (or their families), to feel obligated to opt for suicide.
3. The acceptance of assisted suicide will pose the greatest danger to the most vulnerable members of our community (the poor, elderly, isolated, the disabled, or members of minority groups), and those who lack access to good medical care.
4. The provision for medically assisted suicide places an unbearable responsibility on the doctors involved, assuming a God-like omniscience, for example in judging whether a person is right, or competent, to make a request for assisted suicide.
5. Any proposal to legalise "euthanasia" would create an exception to the whole tenor of our laws which have hitherto sought to protect human life.
6. Overseas legislation (e.g. in the Netherlands, Canada) illustrates that once legalised, it is impossible to set limits on assisted suicide. Initial provisions, however restricted, are subsequently broadened beyond what early proponents envisaged.
7. More fundamentally, Members of Parliament do not have the right to sanction the killing of other human beings in circumstances other than self-defence, or the defence of the Nation.

Yours faithfully,

(Dr) Anthony H Nichols,