

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

8 October 2017

Ms Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA
Chair of Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices

Dear Ms Sanderson,

I am writing in support of any laws that will allow voluntary euthanasia or assisted dying in WA.

If we're lucky, we have a doctor now who may assist us to die but the timing would be solely at the doctor's discretion and the doctor would technically be breaking the law.

Any such assistance would also be right at the very end of life and when someone has already been in great and unrelieved pain for some time. Doctors will not and cannot help when a person has a chronic condition which makes life unbearable, such as a neurological illness. If someone wants to end her/his life under those conditions (voluntary euthanasia or VE), then the act would have to be carried out while the individual was still able to do it of his/her own volition.

Reliable, legal and peaceful methods to end one's life are not readily available to the older generation who may want to avoid a continuing decline in health and dignity. It then becomes a matter of luck whether someone succeeds or ends up the worse for trying. It must be an individual's personal choice to escape a painful and unbearable life without any perceived dignity. A doctor's assistance would help ensure a peaceful death.

Ultimately, I want to have the right to determine how and when my life is to end, if I were terminally ill, suffering unbearably without the prospect of improvement, or if I had to depend on others for even the most basic care. Suitable palliative care should be available to all who want it. However, I should also be able to get medical help for a peaceful death, as long as I am competent and have been informed of alternatives. A good death should be at a place of my choice, peacefully, and with family or friends around.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Colleen Smith