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SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON END OF LIFE CHOICES

From **Murray Hindle**

4th October 2017

Dear Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this submission in support of an end of life choice for all Western Australians.

This short submission is in two parts. The first, on the need for safe legislation and some factors that influence the success or failure of such a bill. The second documents two experiences that led to my support for voluntary assisted dying.

The need for legislation:

There needs to be a process in place by which an individual with a terminal illness has access, at a time of their choosing, to an assisted death.

In spite of what some may maintain, there are cases of suffering that can only be helped by terminal sedation or death. A person with a progressive terminal condition who decides that they have had enough despite the best palliative care should have the right to request assistance to end their suffering.

Any debate on the subject of assisted death **must** be based on **FACTS** not **FAITH**. People have the right to base their attitude towards assisted dying according to their faith. That right however does not extend to denying the rights of the majority and any argument they mount in support of their views must be based on **fact** alone.

Factual data to support your deliberations is widely available. You would be aware of the recent Parliamentary Enquiry held in Victoria which is rich source of information. The data collected in Victoria has led to the carefully safeguarded legislation now before the Victorian Parliament.

The argument that palliative care will suffer if assisted dying is allowed is not supported by the facts. The opposite is true because palliative care will be enhanced by the recognition that when all else fails help will be at hand.

Personal experiences:

My support for an end of life choice has two examples.

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The first was the death of my father from terminal cancer. In the space of eighteen months I watched him go from a strapping six footer to a skeletal husk. Because he was unable to handle the opiates he was given he had unrelieved suffering and in his final weeks asked me to help relieve that suffering. Sadly, without the support of compassionate legislation which would have granted his wish, he died alone and in pain.

The second case that convinced me of the need for assisted dying is the plight that presently confronts my best friend. He has terminal cancer and in spite of the help of palliative care his pain cannot be managed. For some palliative practitioners to say that all pain can be managed and the patient kept comfortable is nonsense. I have seen otherwise. My friend is fearful of what lies ahead and whilst he wants to press on and fight, simply knowing that help is there would be a great comfort to him and his family.

Thank you and in closing I would quote Professor Stephen Hawking who said :

“ To keep people alive against their wishes is the ultimate indignity “

Murray Hindle