

Felicity Roux

19th October 2017

Dr J Purdy (Research)
Committee for End of Life Choices
Legislative Assembly
WA Parliament

Dear Dr Purdy

Submission for End of Life Choices under the first Term of Reference

I watched the short film *Stop the Horror*. It is an enactment of a real death and commissioned to garner support for euthanasia in the recent debate that is reaching its conclusion in Victoria.

Unquestionably, this was a bad death, and it strikes as being medically out of control. At least he was surrounded by loved ones, albeit traumatised. Several times they had to seek out medical assistance. When the appropriate drugs were administered, his relief was obvious. Calm descended and his relatives could reassure him of their constant love. I am left wondering:

- what stopped the medical team from better monitoring and attending to his symptoms?
- over the fortnight, why are no discussions filmed between the relatives and the medical team as to legally available choices to manage his end of life which range
 - o from increasing pain relief (whilst acknowledging that this shortens life), through
 - o to deep sedation (with hydration) of unconsciousness as nature runs its course?

If anything, this film demonstrates the medical team's failure to fulfil their professional (and moral) obligation of relieving pain. Some might call this negligence. More generously, it could be suggested that these health care professionals had no understanding of the Rule of Double Effect, and if they did, they felt completely powerless to act in accordance with it.

This Committee's focus is the interests of Western Australian citizens. Therefore, I recommend that **the Committee actively seeks out evidence on the understanding WA health care professionals have on the Rule of Double Effect and their confidence in acting in accordance with it.**

The Committee is likely to receive submissions in favour of euthanasia or physician assisted suicide to alleviate the pain of the terminally or chronically ill. In the interests of transparency, I ask the Committee to question whether these well-intentioned people understand the distinction between

- actively taking steps to effect a person's death and
- allowing a natural legally-permissible death whilst controlling pain (which can as a last resort include rendering the dying unconscious for intractable pain).

In interview, I also ask the Committee to probe their understanding of the Rule of Double Effect, and if after having it *properly* explained to them whether they still support euthanasia or physician assisted suicide.

As a researcher, I would be interested in undertaking an investigation into medical and lay understanding of the Rule of Double Effect. I ask therefore to appear before the Committee to explore why this is necessary and how it can be achieved.

Yours sincerely

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