



14 October 2017

Principal Research Officer
 Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices
 Legislative Assembly
 Parliament House
 Perth, WA, 6000

Dear Committee,

Concerns in regard to legislation for End of Life Choices

I have taken time to read various articles published both locally and internationally in regard to “end of life choices” legislation as it exists in its various forms and I want to voice my concerns in regard to how this type of legislation expands after enactment and how initial concessions under law can be abused over time.

I personally do not believe that “end of life choices” should become law and I believe that currently there are alternatives such as good palliative care for those who are suffering from pain and terminal illnesses. Further to this, I do not believe a doctor who has taken the Hippocratic Oath should be party to “end of life choices”.

Expansion over time of this type of legislation:

The 2002 legislation as enacted in Belgium and the Netherlands has expanded significantly from its initial context of the terminally ill. This legislation now includes minors and is no longer limited to adults.

In the USA legislation for assisted suicide does not require the monitoring of lethal drugs issued to those who wish to end their lives and who are prescribed these drugs by doctors. There is therefore no control over who will actually use the drugs or how these drugs will be taken by those wishing to end their lives. The US legislation is flawed and this is a concern for me in the context of the debate here in Australia.

Expecting doctors to be party to “end of life choices”, legislation is also a significant concern. The Hippocratic Oath has protected doctor and patient relationships for centuries. This legislation can be abused by unethical or well-meaning doctors. This in turn puts the elderly, mentally vulnerable and those with disabilities at risk. A recent case in Canada with Candice Lewis is an excellent example of this. The doctor assigned to care for Candice tried to pressurise her into euthanasia sighting that Candice was extremely ill. Candice subsequently made a full recovery.

"End of life choices" legislation will further impact other federal and state legislations in Australia. In this regard I have concern for Advanced Health Directives, Enduring Power of Attorney and Enduring Power of Guardianship legislation. While politicians may promise protections within the scope of the end of life choice laws, it is doubtful that the full ramifications of this legislation can be taken into account and provide the required protections. As stated earlier, the "end of life choices" legislation will grow with time and protections may be removed or found to be inadequate.

In summary, as a concerned Australian, I believe that "end of life choices" legislation should never be enacted in Australia or the state of Western Australia. There is sufficient international evidence of the failure of this legislation to protect and ensure the sanctity of life for all Australians, no matter what condition of health they may be in. If required I am prepared to give verbal testimony before the committee.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Adair