



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON END OF LIFE CHOICES IN THE ACT

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Submission Cover Sheet

End of Life Choices in the ACT

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From: Robert Stirling
To: [LA Committee - EOLC](#)
Subject: Inquiry into End of Life Choices in the ACT
Date: Monday, 19 March 2018 9:57:19 PM

To the Committee,

I simply wish to add my support to the concept of voluntary assisted dying being an available alternative for people who are suffering unbearably and wish to end their life with as much dignity as they can muster. This right surely must be regarded as essential in any thinking, humane society.

My father was in a lot of pain for months before he died. He had no terminal illness except old age, but was in a significant degree of pain due to skeletal problems in his back from which he could find no satisfactory relief. On three separate occasions he asked me to end it all for him. I told him if I could legally do it, or arrange for it to be done, I would not hesitate. Unfortunately, obviously, that was not possible. The last thing he wanted was for his life to be dragged out in this manner, knowing there was no remedy to his predicament until his body finally gave out. I would not wish for anyone to spend their final months simply praying for the end. And yes, he held very strong Christian beliefs, but he didn't believe that his God would want any of us to suffer unnecessarily.

The recent Victorian legislation in the assisted dying field is a first step, but there are way too many restrictions for it to be answer so many of us are looking for. If I read it correctly one has to have a terminal illness with a prognosis of six months or less to live and be in unbearable pain. It is acknowledged by medical authorities that estimates of time left for terminally ill patients is notoriously unreliable, with some hanging on for an inordinate period and others checking out well before expected. Therefore, it seems a nonsense to put a time frame on it. The Canadian legislation is far more realistic in not stipulating any times, only requiring certainty that the patient's condition is terminal.

However, why should the right to choose to to end unbearable suffering only be available to those who are diagnosed with a terminal illness? Surely that right should be extended to those whose condition may not be terminal, but whose situation will not improve and who are enduring the same level of suffering, as was the case with my father. In fact, this predicament could be even worse, knowing that your pain will be ongoing, without a terminal illness to end it.

Of course there need to be rigid safeguards in place to ensure that the decision to end a life by voluntary assisted dying is solely that of the patient. It is critical that the motives of the patient are clearly for their own well-being and that no coercion has been used. But please don't let the fact that the patient may be depressed be a barrier to allowing them to end it all. If someone is terminally ill and/or is suffering excruciating pain, there is a good chance they will be feeling a tad depressed. If they are wanting to end their life they will most likely display some level of depression. It is only natural and should not prohibit

them taking the action they wish to. Of course, a history of depression before illness would put things in a different light.

I apologise that I have not been able to put forward a more comprehensive submission, but time has escaped me.

I wish you well with your deliberations.

Regards,

Bob Stirling PSM

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SCULLIN ACT 2614

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