Submission Cover Sheet

End of Life Choices in the ACT

Submission Number: 377
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Re: I am an ACT resident, here is my submission to the inquiry

Dear Secretary,

I have nothing but the highest praise for the palliative care provided by Clare Holland house to my wife for the last month of her fight with lymphoma. However, there needs to be more emphasis on palliative care, as it appears that demand for palliative care services/beds often out-strips supply! One of the benefits of palliative care is that the person needing care is not made to feel that they are a burden, and that they should "choose" to leave this life early, just for the convenience of others. Every individual has intrinsic worth and dignity as a human being, and should be respected - rather than being encouraged to commit suicide as soon as they are unable to work (be a productive member of society), or whatever the problem is! Caring for people in the final stages of their life shows respect, and should be prioritised and given more funding rather than undermining all that by encouraging suicide/euthanasia. In virtually all cases, pain is able to be managed adequately with skilled palliative care, and even in those rare cases where such large doses of pain relief are required that they end up suppressing other bodily functions (such as breathing) so far that the person ends up dying (slightly sooner than they might have otherwise) - that is still not suicide/euthanasia - as the aim was pain relief! Similarly, choosing not to use/accept a particular treatment option (particularly when they are invasive treatments) is not disrespectful, especially when the patient has made an informed decision, and made their choice clear on that treatment option! A "good" death should not involve lots of alarms going off (because breathing and heartbeat have stopped), and have hospital staff come racing in to try starting CPR to save/rescue the person - especially if they have chosen to not receive such treatments. It should be a quiet respectful time, as described above and as provided by palliative care at hospices such as Clare Holland house. Palliative care funding needs to be increased so that it is available to all those who would benefit from receiving it!

Sincerely,
Gary Presneill
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