Submission Cover Sheet

End of Life Choices in the ACT

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Select Committee on End of Life Choices in the ACT

Inquiry into End of Life Choices in the ACT

Kyle Heine

[Redacted] Gilmore A.C.T 2905

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To Whom it may concern,

This is still an emotional subject as I have only recently had to experience the loss of my
grandfather, Philip [redacted] ‘Pops’ as I always knew him by. He was quick of wit and kind
in his words and it didn’t matter where you were from our what you were doing there you had a
friend or the very least someone to talk to when Phil was around.

Phil was and always will be a great role model as he cared for all of his family deeply and
was involved in numerous community services around Canberra being a Freemason. Not only was
he involved in the community outside of work but also for the majority of time he was in Canberra
having overseen many of the renovation & expansion projects at Canberra Hospital including the
Cancer treatment buildings.

Unfortunately the treatment he received there could not help him overcome the 3 types of
cancer which had taken his mind and body. He fought bravely multiple times with Chronic
Lymphatic Leukaemia. However it was the Metastatic Squamous Carcinoma and Melanoma which
he couldn’t beat.

The point of writing this submission begins with his treatment just before Christmas and
New Years. After his radiation treatment for the melanomas in his brain he was rushed to hospital
where he spent 3 nights in the emergency department before being moved to a more permanent
ward. It was here that we found out the treatment needed to be more extensive as in the time it took
to prepare the radiation treatment for the known cancers, others had grown and weren’t in the
original scans. By Christmas he had all but lost his speech and struggled to put together a whole
sentence, he was also unable to articulate his needs and we didn’t realise the pain he was in for a
few days until the physiotherapy staff returned from their holidays. Feeding him through this time
consisted of forcing him to eat a few mouthfuls of soup every meal time or failing that some ice
cream or a nutrient shake. His condition deteriorated over the week between Christmas and New
Years. It was just after new years that the doctors informed us that there were no treatments that
could help him and that they couldn’t offer him anything other then morphine to ease his passing.
Phil being himself was fighting to the very end and survived until the 8th of January where he was
lucky enough to have been moved to Clare Holland House for one night.

When I say we are a close family I am not exaggerating. Pop’s had his wife Marie by his
side almost 24 hours a day from the beginning. His daughters and son were by his side everyday
and even us grandchildren were with him for 3 weeks straight. To see their grief each day as his
body deteriorated without anyone being able to do anything to help is something I hope no one has
to go through.

Why in this day in age is it acceptable for families who love each other to be tormented with
the slow, painful passing of their cherished ones wasting away to mere shadows of their former
selves when we have the means and awareness to ease a tragic time is beyond my comprehension.

By no means am I a particularly religious person, although I was educated in a Catholic
school and do have family who are ministers, but I do have a belief that is very common and that is
to ‘do unto others as you would have others do unto you.’

The greatest gift god gave mankind was the right to choose. Let our decisions be ours and
respect us and our loved ones.