



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: Hendrik de Vries
To: [LA Committee - EOLC](#)
Subject: Dying with dignity
Date: Sunday, 4 February 2018 1:35:51 PM
Attachments: [Memento mori.odt](#)
[Credo.pdf](#)
[letter to Thomas George MP.odt](#)

Dear members of the committee,

You are embarking on an important discussion, which is very close to the heart of many people in Australia, especially the senior members of the population. We are members of that section, my wife and I being in our late 70's.

Of course, at our time of life we discuss these issues regularly with other seniors, and until now we are meeting very few people who disagree with us. I have attached a few poems which show my point of view, including a letter sent to the local member of the NSW parliament, Mr. Thomas George. Since I did not receive even an acknowledgement of receipt from this member of parliament, I assume that the letter was either not read or of so little interest to this representative of the people, that he did not feel the need to respond. I have therefore no hesitation in sending this same letter to your committee. It illustrates our view in this matter.

We are of Dutch origin, and as you know, the Netherlands (and Belgium and Switzerland) have a euthanasia law in operation for a long time already. We never hear or read about misuse or deliberate abuse of this law. At the end of her life, my mother (94, and hardly able to move anymore) asked her GP whether he would help her to die. He explained that he would have to call on another doctor, who did not know her, to make an independent assessment of her medical and mental condition and submit his report to the authorities. My mother: "How long is that going to take?"
GP: "That could take 10 to 14 days."
My mother: "And if I stop eating and drinking, and take no medication?"
GP: "You would not last more than 3 days."
My mother: "Then I am starting now!"

Indeed, after 3 days she died. Whenever I am telling this story to other people, they tell me of having heard similar stories, even in Australia. Death comes to us all, and as we get older, the fear of death evaporates; sometimes "Death is welcomed as a friend!"

The different religions may hold other views, but they should not have the right to impose their superstitions on the non-superstitious part of the population. If the possibility of 'dying with dignity' is available to those who want it, those who do not want it are free to suffer until "the Good Lord" decides that it is time to call them 'home'.

Only individuals should have the right to decide this issue, entities like churches, trade unions or the AMA should not have undue influence beyond the individual's view.

In a world where so many people involuntarily perish from lack of food and medication, we should not spend such great amounts of money on people who would rather be dead.....

Yours sincerely,

Hendrik de Vries.

Memento mori

Remember that your greatest wealth
Is not your money, but your health!

While we are healthy, life is great.
Do we appreciate that enough?
This is a time to celebrate,
For the road ahead may well get rough.

Do not postpone your heart's desire;
Do what you want, while you still may:
Too soon we lose that youthful fire.
Our fate can change in just one day,

Not really 'if', but rather 'when'
A final illness comes our way
And robs us of our dreams, and then
We're sliding down, till at the end
A prolonged life means prolonged suffering,
And death is welcomed as a friend.

Hendrik de Vries, Stoney Chute, 20 July 2017.

Credo

Religious believers follow ancient traditions,
Which to critical thinkers are mere superstitions.
Whether muslim or hindu, whether christian or jew,
Each maintains that his own superstition is true.

Though the world's circumstances are changing so fast,
They won't change with the times but hang on to the past:
They keep killing each other like, once, christians and moors,
Claiming "My superstition is better than yours!"

When stripped down to the basics, most are peas in a pod:
There once was a prophet addressed by a "god",
Who told him how he and his people should live,
By rules which the prophet henceforward would give.

These prophets did often have life-changing visions
And may well have been quite sincere in their missions;
But they had no idea of the scope of "creation",
The centre of which always was their own nation.

"We are God's chosen people, He liketh us best!"
"God made us in His image", (how nicely expressed.....)
Religions are full of such remarkable phrases
And the faithful don't tire of singing God's praises.

"Allahu akbar!" Yes, God truly is great,
As every good muslim five times daily must state.
"For Thine are the power and glory!" For sure,
This kind of flattery makes God feel secure.....

But, as many astronomers tell us today,
There are galaxies millions of lightyears away!
God, creator of cosmos, is too big for our mind:
So we've created our own god, loving and kind;

A father-like god, who'll take us by the hand;
A god we can talk to, who will understand.
A god with the values that we, too, hold dear,
Whose approval we seek and whose anger we fear.

Who'll forgive us our sins and will give us "His" blessing,
But **we** must do **our** part and just keep confessing....
And we flatter "Him" until we run out of breath,
In the hope that He giveth us life after death.

If we need to believe, we may believe just as well
That there's no god and no devil, neither Heaven nor Hell;
After death there's no pleasure, no suffering, only absolute stillness:
Life is simply no more than a terminal illness.....

Hendrik de Vries, St. Ch. , October 2015.

(1 lightyear is 9.480.528.400.000 kms., the distance covered in a year by light at 300.000 kms per second.)

Stoney Chute, 15 July 2017.

Dear Sir,

You will be aware that a bill introducing help with dying is shortly to be discussed in the NSW parliament. This issue has been discussed in Australia already for a long time; it now seems that a large majority of citizens is in favour of the possibility to die with dignity. Those who, for religious or other reasons, are not in favour, would still be free not to avail themselves of the opportunity to end life with dignity.

In Nederland, my country of origin, euthanasia laws have been in place for a great number of years and there are enough checks and balances to appease those, who would have serious concerns about euthanasia. Religion, and other forms of superstition, should not be allowed to usurp the rights, and override the opinions, of the population at large.

Earlier this week, we lost a good old friend (86) in Melbourne to pancreatic cancer. On New Year's Eve, she rang me to discuss the possibilities of euthanasia in Nederland; I am not an expert, but suggested that she would not be eligible unless perhaps she still had a Dutch passport. Three weeks ago, weak with pain and the effects of morphine, she asked a visitor "How much longer?" Fortunately, her suffering is over.

Sir, it should not be necessary for terminally ill people to travel to the other side of the world to get assistance with dying. Please support the passing of the bill and let people decide for themselves whether they will avail themselves of the possibility to die with dignity, if there is no hope of recovery.

In an overpopulated world, where hundreds of millions go hungry, it is almost obscene to spend so much money keeping people alive, who would rather be dead!

In the hope that enlightenment and common sense will prevail, I sign, with kind regards,

Hendrik de Vries. XXXXXXXXXX Stoney Chute.