



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: Lynn McKee
To: [LA Committee - EOLC](#)
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Hi

Thank you for the opportunity to give my opinion on this topic.

Last month my 89 year old father died of leukaemia. He received his terminal diagnosis about 3 months before he died.

He had lived happily and independently in the family home for 55 years, including 15 years after my mother died. He feared moving into a care home or hospital, but for the last 4 weeks of his life needed to be in one because he and his house were unsuitable for the level of care he required. He disliked being in the company of strangers, and hated being dependent on others for his self-care needs. A proud man, he was embarrassed, ashamed and angry when he needed strangers to toilet, wash and lift him.

He asked several times (in vain) over his final 2 weeks if someone could help him bring things to an end. His quality of life was very poor - having been an outdoor, active man all his life he was distressed at being bedridden with no hope of ever being able to do the things he loved again. Although the standard of care in the care home was excellent, it was unfamiliar and noisy, he was afraid, and he was upset at watching fellow residents deteriorate and die around him, often in distress.

For the final 3 days and 2 nights of his life Dad lay motionless in a strange bed, unable to eat, drink or speak. He was completely lucid and the panic in his eyes was hard to watch. He gasped noisily for breath day and night for those last days. It was awful for those of us who loved him, and for him. Staff pumped him full of drugs which were meant to knock him out but didn't. Morphine made him highly agitated with hallucinations and screaming fits. It was a relief when he finally died. Had he been a pet animal, those caring for him would have put him out of his misery about a week earlier, and saved him such a distressing end. I remain guilt-ridden that I was unable to prevent this for him, and traumatised by the experience of it.

I have always felt that voluntary assisted dying should be available to terminally ill people who want it. I watched various European countries provide it to their citizens. Dad's experience has made me more certain that it is the right thing to do. There are plenty of good models around the world that can be used as a basis for safeguarding the vulnerable. There is plenty of research showing that people are less likely to take their own lives prematurely if they know they have access to assisted dying. With proper safeguards in place, there is no excuse to force people to die a long, painful and distressing death, when they could be helped to die quickly and peacefully where and when they choose. Those who seek to impose their personal religious superstitions on the population in this regard should not be permitted to do so; if their gods are against assisted dying then they need not access it themselves, but they do not have a right to deny access to others in a secular society.

I am excited that this subject is being discussed and that some states are drafting legislation to trial soon. I sincerely hope that voluntary assisted dying is available when my own time comes. The thought of a death like my poor father endured fills me with dread.

Good luck with the campaign.

Lynn