



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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Inquiry into End of Life Choices in the ACT

I would like put forward my views on voluntary assisted dying being legislated in the ACT.

I certainly would welcome anything that could give choice to the frail aged, who like mother, 93, would welcome a dignified end to a full life well lived.

She has done her time in an aged care facility – putting up with me going in every day for nearly two years to a least try to get her involved in some activity. On reflection, this was probably more for me than for her. On entry to the home, in May 2016, after a serious fall at home and 7 weeks in hospital, she expressed a wish to just stay in bed and pass away. But being almost as strong minded as her, like mother like daughter, my persistence prevailed. However, she has not enjoyed the extra time. Having completely lost her central vision through macular degeneration she cannot watch TV, read the newspaper or play her beloved bridge game. She is very deaf so radio, recorded books and even reading to her is difficult. Reduced mobility, plus the lack of sight, precludes bus trips. In any case she has little patience for organised groups. She was always fiercely independent, uncompromising in her views - a woman of strong opinions, who still voices them strongly.

Two weeks ago, she fell in the aged care home and broke her hip. The operation to pin it went well, but I doubt that she will be persuaded by me or anyone else to put in the effort needed to get out of bed and use her walker again. And why should she? What is the quality of life she can return to? She describes it as 'purgatory' and wants to go peacefully in her sleep. However, she has no terminal illness – is just old and frail. So frail indeed, that her left shoulder has just dislocated itself. Her arms are bruised and swollen from catheters and blood tests, and she is eating little. She will probably be discharged in a couple of days to end her days in bed in the aged care facility, manhandled to change her pads and have washes. I am sure we can keep her pain free – physically – but, as she says, she is in mental anguish. Unfortunately her mind is quite clear. She knows what she wants, but the system - and me up until now - have conspired to condemn her to life. Or just to existence really; it is no life.

As for risks to individuals associated with voluntary assisted dying, clearly there need to be safeguards to ensure that it is the individuals themselves who make the choice. However, those who wish to die in dignity should also have a voice. We should not be so concerned with protecting the rights of some, to deny the rights of others. People like my mother need a choice. I would also like the same, when I get to that stage.

I invite you to come to speak to my mother herself. Assuming she survives her current stay in Canberra Hospital (about which we have absolutely no complaints I should emphasise), she will be in [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Mandy Scott

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