



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL

Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Chair), Ms Leanne Castley (Deputy Chair),
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023

Submission Number: 002

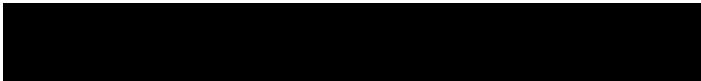
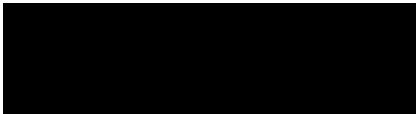
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Voluntary Assisted Dying

Rod Pitcher

Submission to the Inquiry into Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023
Select Committee on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023

Rod Pitcher



I request and approve publication of my submission, including my full name, on the Committee’s and any other website as required, and would appreciate being notified of it.

Voluntary Assisted Dying

Rod Pitcher

This submission discusses VAD, its introduction and potential in relation to Human Rights. It argues that VAD should be freely available to any adult who wants it.

Introduction

I believe that every adult has the right to end their own life at any time they choose.

I believe that society has a duty to allow and to help any citizen to exercise that right.

I believe the right to die at a time one wishes to is a basic Human Right. Each adult person should be allowed that right. Whether or not they choose to accept it is their own decision to make. No one should be permitted to make that decision for them, nor should they be allowed to make it for other people. They should not have to satisfy, nor be subject to, other people's standards, requirements or limitations. Every adult should have the right to choose, to make their own decision.

Discussion

Some people, for religious or ethical reasons, believe that ending one's own life is wrong. They are entitled to hold that belief, but they are not entitled to force their opinion onto other people who believe differently. In doing so, they take away those other people's right to make their own decisions. There are bound to be objections from various religious groups, but why should they be allowed to dictate the actions of people who do not share their beliefs nor recognise their authority? Just because some people believe that self-immolation is wrong does not necessarily make it so. Other people may have beliefs that consider self-immolation acceptable under certain conditions.

In the past whenever VAD has gained some approval it's proposed use has always been restricted to people suffering terminal and very painful illnesses, and must be certified by an appropriate medical authority. But it should not be a requirement that other people, however trained and well-meaning, be allowed to decide for the applicants. The applicants are entitled to make their own decisions, and should not have to satisfy someone else's conditions or examinations. There should not be any test for VAD. The only requirement should be that the person wants it.

Of course, there would have to be rules and conditions. Perhaps applicants should be required to make an appointment in two or three day's time, to give them a chance for second thoughts. Counselling could be offered but not necessarily accepted. If they change their mind for any reason, they need only cancel the appointment, or simply not turn up. If the applicant has no change of mind, all that will be required is to turn up for the appointment, confirm the decision and allow the event to proceed. A system such as this would give the applicant ample time to decide how to proceed, and the result would be a clear expression of the applicants' right to pick a time at which to end their lives and the freedom to do so.

The decision to introduce VAD should not be politically motivated. Politicians should not decide while having one eye on the polls. Nor should it be a conscience vote, where each one's decision is biased by their own beliefs. It should be a decisive move to guarantee a basic Human Right to all citizens. Whether a person undertakes to use that Right is their own decision, just like any other right, which they should be allowed to make themselves and not controlled by the religious, political, nor any other beliefs, of others.

VAD would also be beneficial in removing the trauma associated with a suicide for the various people who would become involved, such as Police, Paramedics and family members,

who would not have to deal with a possibly messy suicide. It would also be of benefit to the person ending their life, since it would be over quickly, and without the risk of pain or other possible troubles associated with a hasty or badly arranged suicide.

When such procedures are permitted, it will mean that an adult can choose the time of his or her own death (barring accidents of course), which I believe is a basic Human Right. Each person should be allowed that right. Whether or not they choose to accept it is their own decision to make. No one should be permitted to make that decision for them, nor should they be allowed to make it for other people. Everyone should have the right to choose, to make their own decision, themselves, not to have their right to choose denied by people who don't want the choice themselves and refuse to allow other people to have it.

Summing Up

If a person's life is meaningless, a soul-destroying torture and has no prospect of ever getting any better, why should they be forced to live, when all they want is their right to die?

Having VAD freely available to adults would mean that they could die at a time of their own choosing, in a socially acceptable way, and without the stigma attached to suicide, successful or unsuccessful.

Will you allow a person to choose to die quietly, with dignity and at peace?