



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON END OF LIFE CHOICES IN THE ACT

Ms Bec Cody MLA (Chair), Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA (Deputy Chair), Ms Tara Cheyne MLA,
Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA, Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA.

Submission Cover Sheet

End of Life Choices in the ACT

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From: Matt
To: [LA Committee - EOLC](#)
Subject: End of life choices
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Good afternoon members of the select committee,

It is with a great deal of pride that I see the ACT Government is prepared to tackle (again) the emotion charged topic of assisted dying and end of life choices.

If someone left an animal member of their family to die in pain with no dignity, they would have the animal taken from them, euthanised humanly and they would be facing a magistrate for the neglect they had shown and rightly so. What is concerning is that the law today deems that a human in endless, debilitating pain, with no hope of relief or recovery is not offered or afforded the same humane treatment that an animal is.

I speak from experience.

Would have I preferred to see my grandmother Alma treated with the same respect that my pet beagle Bill was? Both had terminal cancer. Both were in excruciating pain. Yet as a 10 year old, I had to see my beloved grandmother suffer metastatic breast cancer until she finally passed away at home on my 11th birthday. Why was she at home? Because Liverpool hospital could do no more for her. She was sent home to die so they could have a free bed. My grandfather, Jack, was given a bottle of morphine and told to keep her as comfortable as possible but not to give her too much, it may kill her. Oh the irony.

Maybe watching Jack die two years later, screaming in pain as terminal multiple myeloma cracked his bones from the inside was the humane thing but I doubt it. In the end, all he knew was unceasing agony and confusion as the cancer killed him. He did not know his eldest daughter, Jean, my mother. He did not know me, and that was a brutal blow. Watching him disappear as the anaemia brought about by the multiple myeloma destroyed his memory of all he loved was not a great way for a 13 year old to see his only grandfather pass away.

Would I be prepared to have my life "cut short" if I was in this situation? YES. I do not suffer the highly irrational fear of death that pervades western society. Death is a natural part of life. That doesn't make it pleasant for those left behind but I ask you, what is a better memory? The chance to say goodbye calmly and with love, then watch the cessation of suffering or watching as a loved one is ravaged by disease? Perhaps the slow intractable demise of a persons mind is kinder to the family as they watch their loved one mentally disappear, never to return, leaving only a physical husk behind?

We, as a society, have access to palliative care and this is a fine thing but why have we not, in the 21st century, taken this to the next logical step? I do not speak of culling humans wildly, but of offering well thought out, regulated and most importantly, humane options to those with a terminal condition and to their families.

I ask that the select committee take into account my views on the desirability of voluntary assisted dying being legislated in the ACT (it is highly desirable) whilst assessing the risks to individuals and the community associated with voluntary assisted dying and whether and how these can be managed. Allow this to be a balanced process that can lead to a dignified choice.

I am happy to be contacted should any of the select committee members have any questions or seek further clarification.

Kind regards
Matt Leonard

