



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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**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

**Submission Number: 108**

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To the Secretary  
Select Committee on End of Life Choices in the ACT  
Legislative Assembly for the ACT,  
GPO Box 1020  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

6 February 2018

Dear Sir / Madam

Thank you for inviting submissions to the Inquiry into End of Life Choices also from citizens outside of the ACT. This is an important issue which has the potential to affect all Australians. I don't feel qualified to comment on most of the terms of reference, but may I respond to the main question:

***Should we legalize 'voluntary assisted dying' also termed: 'medically-assisted rational suicide'?***

Proposals for law reform have been on the agenda forever it seems. Many bills tabled in Parliament yet all (but one in the NT) rejected. I can't help wondering: if various reputable polls repeatedly show that the majority of Australians (75-85%) are in favour of law reform, who our MPs are representing, if not their constituents? Are they as impartial as they are meant to be? It needs scrutiny.

We will all grow old and eventually die. In an 'ideal situation' it is a fairly predictable process and palliative care would be called for to allow us to die peacefully. But it can also be a nightmare of unbearable physical and psychological suffering. Old age ailments, loss of capacity and dignity may be experienced as equally intolerable and may not be eased with palliative care. In this case, when one comes to the point of no return, we should have a humane way out. There should be a system that will help us achieve a gentle death of our choosing.

**There must be a legal choice: how, when and where to die  
and the ultimate decision must lie with the patient.**

It is clear that to establish the rules and safeguard both patient and doctors, we need a sensible, secure law. And we do not have to invent the wheel to draft one. Others did it before us. Or we could go back to our previous attempts and iron out the differences. I am sure there will be a way if everyone cooperates.

I am originally from Holland and I know how their system works. It works. But be aware that there is much misrepresentation about how laws operate there and in other foreign countries. Please, research or even visit these countries yourself to get the facts and determine the truth. If these citizens can trust their system to respect their autonomy and provide a gentle death of their own choice, why can't we?

It is a sad state of affairs that we have to travel to another country to seek assistance to die, instead of being able to stay in our own home surrounded by loved ones.

Thank you for considering my submission. I will be pleased to be of assistance if I can.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

Ms Tina Christensen

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### ***Summary of Legal Requirements for VAD / MARS***

- Adult only > 18 yrs+ (some > 12yrs)
- Repeated and consistent request in writing to GP
- Full mental capacity (if not, referred to psychiatrist)
- No coercion, external pressure or outside interference
- Persistent, intolerable suffering, physical or mental (GP to assess)
- Incurable illness with limited term to live
- Patient kept informed of condition, life expectancy, options (palliative care)
- GP and another independent doctor to agree
- GP to monitor self-administer prescribed medication, or administer euthanasia
- Case reported to Review/ Evaluation Committee

#### ***The GP / Primary doctor must :***

- be convinced that there is a voluntary, well-considered request
- be convinced that there is hopeless, unbearable suffering
- inform the patient about the situation and the prospects
- discuss with the patient reasonable alternatives / options
- consult at least one other, independent physician
- assist the patient to die in a medically careful manner
- report to authorities as required