



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

Submission Number: 186

Date Authorised for Publication: 29/3/18


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To: [LA Committee - EOLC](#)
Subject: End of life choices
Date: Wednesday, 7 March 2018 7:19:28 AM

I have followed closely debates about end of life choices and experiences with legislation in other places. I find the area extremely complex, possibly too complex to be regulated by legislation. I respect the right of those who wish to determine the course of their life, but then I wonder why this right is withheld from those whose life may be intolerable, but who do not fit the categories that can be prescribed by law.

I am thinking of some people in Belgium who have suffered for years from severe depression and for whom treatment has been no help? What about people with dementia who also have another condition which is terminal? What about people with Down Syndrome who may be on the cusp of death, but who are being kept alive because it can be difficult to know what is actually going on, even to know if they are suffering? What about a very intelligent and sensitive person with a severe mental illness who understands that treatment is not effective, that he faces a life of extreme suffering and he seeks the only relief possible? Resolving the situation of children close to death also raises dilemmas.

My own position is that I wish to live my life to the fullest, that is to its natural end, even if pain is involved. Given advances in pain management, I have the hope that it won't be. However, I live in a pluralist society and I understand that there are many beliefs and wishes to be considered.

I return to my initial contention. This is a very complex matter and I am not sure that legislation can provide a practical and just solution.

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