



**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: 329**

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From: William A.G. Dovers

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20 March 2018

The Committee Secretary  
Select Committee on End of Life Choices in the ACT  
GPO Box 1020  
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam,

**SUBMISSION TO SELECT COMMITTEE ON END OF LIFE CHOICES IN THE ACT**

I strongly support the right of individuals, who are either suffering a painful terminal illness or who have a substantially diminished quality of life, to choose to end their life in a merciful and dignified manner. Further, they should be able to be assisted in that endeavour without risk of adverse legal action against those who provide help.

In addition to adding my support for voluntary euthanasia as a matter of principle the purpose of my submission is to request that the focus of the Committee's consideration be broadened from those suffering intolerable pain to other situations where the quality of life of individuals is substantially diminished. The particular example that I am concerned with is Alzheimer's disease, which in its later stages results in an inability to carry out the most basic and simple things and, finally, with sufferers existing in a catatonic state. Both my mother and her sister suffered this insidious disease and I witnessed both deteriorate through to their deaths.

There are many conditions that affect aged people's ability to do things for themselves while leaving them with the capacity to enjoy, at least to some degree, the remainder of their lives through social interaction and innovative activities. However, for those unable to express themselves and/or with a much diminished capacity to process any information their quality of life is reduced to a point where I would posit that it ceases to exist.

Although not wishing in any way to downplay the situation of someone suffering severe pain as a result of a terminal illness, such people generally retain the ability to take their own life without assistance should their situation become intolerable (the only option under current legislation). Someone suffering serious cognitive decline, such as those suffering Alzheimer's, would have to make such a decision much earlier than they might really want to in order to retain the ability to do so independently.

Due to my family history I have an increased risk of Alzheimer's and have given considerable thought to what I might do should I contract that disease. I have determined that I do not wish to suffer through the end states of Alzheimer's and would take my own life. Although I am sure my children would be willing to assist me in such circumstances I would not allow them to jeopardise their futures due to the probability of prosecution under current laws. Therefore, given the certain decline in my cognitive processes I have concluded that I

would have to end my life well ahead of the time that it would be otherwise necessary if assisted euthanasia was available to me.

This latter option is available in several other countries and I believe it should be available in Australia.

There clearly need to be safeguards, but these have been well canvassed around those suffering intolerable pain and I will not go into them further, other than to say that in the case of severe cognitive decline the assessment timeframe must be significantly advanced (several years earlier) to ensure the sufferer can express their wishes clearly and issues of potential duress/pressure can be dealt with adequately.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. Above the box, there are faint, handwritten scribbles in black ink.

W.A.G. DOVERS