



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

Submission Number: 380

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From: Edwina Barton <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, 22 March 2018 7:30 PM
To: LACommitteeEOLC@parliament.act.gov.au
Subject: Submission to Inquiry into End of Life Choices in the ACT

Dear Committee Members

I wish to comment on ToR 2 and 5, namely:

- (2) ACT community views on the desirability of voluntary assisted dying being legislated in the ACT
- (5) the impact of Federal legislation on the ACT determining its own policy on voluntary assisted dying and the process for achieving change.

On 2, I consider it highly desirable that voluntary assisted dying be legislated in the ACT.

On 5, I consider that the impact of current Federal legislation on the ACT determining its own policy on voluntary assisted dying and the process for achieving change is negative, unreasonable, undemocratic and highly undesirable.

I support voluntary assisted dying legislation because:

- every citizen should have the right to choose how, when and where they die
- as a fit, strong and healthy 70 year old, I have the capacity to end my life any time I choose, by my own hand
- but if serious illness or disability were to incapacitate me in a way that prevented me from doing so myself, it would be grossly unjust to deprive me of the right to instruct someone else to help me do so
- for that reason, I intend to take my own life while I'm still fit and strong - because I have no confidence that the law would respect, let alone facilitate, my wishes
- some citizens will choose not to take advantage of assisting dying laws - that is their right
- but no citizen should try to impose his/her views on assisted dying on others, whether for religious or other reasons.

I urge the ACT Government to legislate to give citizens the choice of assisted dying, and to not penalise those suffering mental ill health compared to other forms of ill health. Give the power of informed consent to citizens. Only the individual citizen can decide whether, for them, ending their life is the choice they feel is right for them. If they so decide and cannot carry out that decision themselves, they should have the legal right to instruct another person to help them, in the manner and at the time and place of the citizen's own choosing.

I would also like to see an End of Life Centre established in the ACT, to help citizens plan for and implement end-of-life decisions in an informed way and to provide neutral counselling, support and advice. Religious entities must have no role in that, under any circumstances.

I am happy for my comments to be made public, and to provide any further information the Committee may require.

Yours sincerely

Edwina Barton

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From: Edwina Barton [mailto:[REDACTED]]
Sent: Friday, 23 March 2018 5:39 AM
To: LA Committee - EOLC <LACCommitteeEOLC@parliament.act.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Submission to Inquiry into End of Life Choices in the ACT

May I add one further point to my submission below?

Some years back, the Australian parliament enacted an amendment to the Criminal Code which made it a criminal offence to discuss ending one's life over the internet or phone (I regret I can't cite the particular provision or Act).

That law is unjust and abhorrent - suicide is not a crime, & it is absolutely wrong to criminalise discussion of it. I urge the Committee to ask the Australian Government to repeal that law.

Regards

Edwina
Edwina Barton