



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

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

Dear Secretary

There can be no 'effective' safeguards for the safe killing of vulnerable people. I am concerned that the ACT Legislative Assembly would be considering the assisted-suicide laws in the ACT. I submit the following for the committee's consideration:

- Around 8 people take their own lives everyday by choice - I am disappointed that the government is now considering introducing laws that would help people take their own lives for any reason. The idea that if suicide is made legitimate in some circumstances, inevitably it affects those contemplating suicide for non-medical reasons. The Victorian discussion acknowledged that extra suicides were inevitable 'collateral damage' from the legalisation of euthanasia but was willing to accept this. How can the ACT Government allow this to happen?
- We in this country have an excellent palliative care system. This will be undermined if assisted suicide becomes law. Rather than legalising suicide, the Government should expand Canberra's only palliative care hospice Clare Holland House that is always fully occupied.
- Assisted suicide goes against the principles of the Hippocratic Oath that has guided the medical professions for over 2000 years. The proposed change will undermine the medical profession and turn some doctors into professional killers rather than healers.
- These laws have been catastrophic in other countries. For example, Belgium kills the **mentally ill** and there are now **protocols for children**. In Oregon, almost half of those who are assisted to suicide speak of their concern of being a burden to family and friends. In Vermont, stories about people who had recovered from terminal illness (or for whom a terminal illness had been misdiagnosed) and enjoyed years of life were particularly persuasive.
- The proposed changes will create an ethical minefield for doctors, patients and their families. We as a society have a responsibility to care for those vulnerable. Euthanasia obviously makes it easier for family members to pressure the elderly to end their lives early. It also creates the conditions in which the elderly are more likely to feel like they are a burden and that 'voluntary-suicide' is 'the right thing to do'.

The proposed laws would be a blight on our progressive society in the ACT that prides itself in caring for those who can't care for themselves. Please do not introduce these laws.

Yours

Jayan Parry

 Fisher ACT