



**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

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
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Bill Alcock

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Port Macquarie

Despite the fact that over 80% of Australians favour physician assisted suicide for those who have lost quality of life the government refused to legislate accordingly

As you will read in my letter below, my wife was so fortunate to have a caring and compassionate doctor when she was at risk of confinement in a nursing home, her Enduring Guardian informed the doctor of my wife`s choice for end of life care, so she instructed her treating nurse to administer morphine injections on the hour. My wife passed away peacefully with all family by her bedside

There is just no way I will linger on in a nursing home indefinitely suffering from dementia, Alzheimer`s, incontinence and the like, I just cannot understand why, when at least 80% of our citizens are in favour, the government refuses to legislate to allow us to choose euthanasia when quality of life is lost.

It must be costing the country billions of dollars to keep patients in nursing homes who do not want to be there when their quality of life is lost

In my opinion everyone should have the right to choose medical assistance for a dignified and peaceful death, if quality of life is lost, provided this choice has been documented in an advance health care directive whilst of sound mind

For your information I had this letter published in the Sydney Morning Herald

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## End of Life Care

### My Life, My Death, My Choice

I am an 92 year old veteran affairs pensioner/Christian I recently arrived home from Prince of Wales hospital where I had open heart surgery. I have several other failing parts and I am scared stiff that I may be confined indefinitely to a nursing home

When quality of life is lost and the sufferer is confined in care with Alzheimer's, dementia, incontinence and the like palliative care is definitely not enough

My wife had uncontrollable diabetes and inoperable heart condition, she was admitted to hospital 17th September 2015 on the 19th September her treating doctor rang to advise me that she was failing to the extent that she would have to be transferred to a nursing home, this is not what my wife wanted at end of life, I called her enduring guardian, and he conferred with her doctor, showing her Pat's choices in her advance health care directive, no resuscitation, no treatment that would prolong life,, no further food or sustenance.

The doctor instructed her treating nurse to administer morphine injections on the hour, Pat passed away peacefully with family by her side

I hope I get a compassionate and caring doctor like this lady if ever I am in the same position.

When our pets lose quality of life the vet eases them out in a dignified manner why not humans?

I find it very difficult to believe that anyone with an ounce of compassion can deny those who have lost quality of life be it degeneration or terminal illness the right to make a choice for a dignified and peaceful death provided this has been documented in an advance health care directive whilst of sound mind.

When the end is nigh it is best to avoid hospital. The health system is geared to actively treating patients and prolonging life not to recognize the dying

There are thousands of patients in hospitals and nursing homes with no quality of life lingering on indefinitely awaiting the blessing of death to release them from their despair

If ever I am unfortunate enough to be placed in the same situation I hope there is a sympathetic doctor around to end my life in a dignified and peaceful manner

In light of the Governments unsympathetic attitude I have no option but to direct in my

advance health care directive that if I should lose quality of life I do not want any medical treatment that will prolong my life and I do not want any further sustenance or fluid. Although it will take me a few days to die this option is better than the alternative. It would give me great peace of mind if I could get medical assistance to die in a dignified manner if I should lose quality of life.

It is my firm opinion that enforced prolonged life when quality of life is lost is a fate far worse than death, I fear degeneration far more than I fear death, it is inhumane to leave those who have lost quality of life, whether it be degeneration or terminal illness that leaves them confined in a nursing home indefinitely suffering from dementia, Alzheimer's, incontinence and the like.

Times have changed in my grandparents day there were no nursing homes my parents cared for them at home, the family doctor every other week to check on them issue scripts and when they lost quality of life he asked for a family conference and was given permission to ease them out with analgesics. I was not called euthanasia but rather compassion

My strong belief is the right for everyone to make a choice for euthanasia should they lose quality of life has been influenced by two family occurrences: -

The first a heavy smoker with cancer of the throat deteriorated quickly, I could hear him gasping for breath as I entered the main hospital entrance, he could not communicate, did not recognise anyone and was being fed intravenously' fortunately I was able to persuade a sympathetic doctor to ease him out in a dignified manner

The second a mate who served with me in the second world war who had always expressed the wish not to be confined in a nursing home. The doctor put his arm around him one day in my presence and said to him "Dont you worry Tom when the time comes I will ease you out" This gave Tom great peace of mind, however the time came when Tom had to go in a nursing home and was given medication to stop him wandering at night, crying out and disturbing other patients. He deteriorated quickly became incontinent bowels and bladder, was bedridden, unable to communicate and did not recognise anyone

When I approached the doctor for help he said sorry I cannot do anything for him now as all medication in a nursing home has to be documented. Tom was allowed to lie in his bed in this state for 15 months, surely you must agree that this is an extremely cruel fate to impose upon someone who had served his country with distinction

I would strongly recommend that everyone prepare an advance health care directive and appoint an enduring guardian, so that he/she has the authority to liaise with the doctor in the preparation of a health care management plan when quality of life is lost

The health care management plan should provide that you not be subjected to and

intervention or treatment aimed at prolonging life, and that and distressing symptoms (including and caused by lack of food or fluid) are fully controlled by appropriate analgesics or other treatment even though this may shorten life. For those wishing to avoid prolonged confinement in a nursing home and distress to loved ones, I would strongly recommend that they take this action whilst of sound mind

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In conclusion let me make it clear that is not my intention to impose my views on anyone , however I consider that euthanasia should be an option for those who have documented their wishes in an advance health care directive.

Yours Sincerely

Bill Alcock  
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