



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: 179

Date Authorised for Publication: 29/3/18

From: Anne Yuille
To: [LA Committee - EOLC](#)
Subject: Submission on End of Life Choices in the ACT
Date: Friday, 2 March 2018 5:55:38 PM

Dear Select Committee on EOLC in the ACT

I wish to make a submission strongly supporting the introduction of Assisted Dying legislation in the ACT. I appreciate there is an initial hurdle to be overcome in the Andrews Bill which (outrageously) allows the Federal Government to interfere with the legislative self-determination of an ACT Government duly elected by ACT citizens. That hurdle is all the more reason for members of the ACT community to express loudly and clearly their views and wishes in regard to something as important as end of life processes, lest anyone at any level of government should think we simply want decisions to be made for us without consultation.

I am an ACT citizen, aged 70 and blessedly free of any adverse health condition. I believe that human society has a duty to value all lives and to give priority to enabling all lives to be as fulfilled and joyous and safe as possible, from birth to death. That belief is entirely consistent with my view that a human being has the right to decide the manner of her/his death. I do not believe that a law enabling a person to receive careful and compassionate assistance to die at the point life has become intolerable for that person is a slippery slope to devaluing life, or devaluing some lives. On the contrary, it is because of the value we accord to human life that, at its inevitable end, we can and should enable as much choice and autonomy as possible in that final human experience.

2 years ago my father died, aged 95, during a family holiday at Narooma. In the late morning of a perfect summer day he bathed in the sea, walked slowly to sit on a rock and dry in the sun, and collapsed. He was in a coma within half an hour and died in hospital a few hours later without regaining consciousness. It was a shock for us and it caused a bit of drama on the beach, but we felt it was a good death. 2 years earlier my mother had died, aged 92. She had been in steady decline for several months, was in severe pain, did not want to get out of bed, had lost her appetite and finally went into kidney failure. In hospital she was kept alive while she was subjected to a barrage of tests over a fortnight. It was concluded by the doctors that there was nothing to be done and we watched for another fortnight, waiting for her to die. It was not a good death. Would she have chosen a painless assisted death a month earlier, if this had been available to her? Who knows? The point is she did not have a choice and she suffered, and we suffered watching her suffer.

Many more people are now having conversations about death, facing it squarely as a fact of life. All of my friends, without exception, are of the view that it should be lawful for a friend or a family member or a doctor to assist a person to die painlessly if that person expressly wishes it. There can be no element of compulsion for anyone - that is fundamental to matters of personal choice. I believe that ACT legislators can be more courageous and less hamstrung than their Victorian counterparts, but the point is that assisted dying legislation is tried and tested in an increasing number of jurisdictions in the world and nowhere has it been rescinded because people didn't want it. If you are satisfied that our community wants to have the choice of an assisted death, you have a duty to fight for that right to be appropriately enacted.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Your sincerely
Anne Yuille


Watson ACT 2602

Ph: 