

Submission into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021

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Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

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30 May 2021

My submission in relation to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021

Dear Health and Environment Committee,

I am writing to you today in a plead to convince you against legalising Voluntary Assisted Dying. It is my opinion that Voluntary Assisted Dying is an inhuman form of medical treatment, that does not bring value to the medical profession but instead completely undermines Palliative Care Specialists. In addition, it does not seek to demonstrate the advancement of modern-day medicine as it fails to address the problems that arise with terminal illnesses such as: physical pain, hopelessness, depression and global suffering. Instead, it deflects these issues and is an unethical form of practice.

I am a 29-year-old daughter of a very humble and well-respected retired Palliative Care Physician. I am similarly a Registered Nurse who has looked after many dying patients over my few years of working in the healthcare industry. I have always idolized the work that my dad and his colleagues alike have done. From as young as I can remember I would find any excuse to come along with him to visit patient's in the nursing home or hospital. I loved seeing their faces light up when my dad walked into the room and admired my dad's ability to be honest yet empathetic with his patients. My dad and other Palliative Care team members do a phenomenal job at providing a service that offers good 'high quality care' that is able to manage symptoms of those persons with a terminal illness effectively. Palliative Care is not just about managing pain, but also the psychological, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of both the patient and their loved ones. With proper Palliative Care management, my dad has successfully improved a copious number of patient's quality of life over the years. Furthermore, he has assisted patients with fulfilling their dying wishes and ensuring they are as comfortable as possible at the end of life. I have been a witness first hand to the service Palliative Care can provide from both a

personal and professional perspective and I cannot say I have ever seen someone suffer a painful death under this form of care.

Legalising Voluntary Assisted Dying would be completely undermining medical professionals who have studied and worked hard their entire lives to provide good quality end of life care to patients. I am not dismissing those who have come forward to state their loved ones suffered at the end of life but I ask the questions: Did they receive early enough palliative care intervention, or better yet were they under a palliative care team at all? Was their suffering prolonged by doctors putting them through aggressive unnecessary treatment without giving them the alternative options?

My second point I'd like to make is who is going to respond to the needs of those left behind? i.e. the grief and the sense of abandonment that they may feel when their loved one chooses to end their life too short. In addition, the questions those young children affect might ask. How is this going to affect them when they find out that grandma had enough and decided to use the Assisted Dying Legislation?

Thirdly, in a world where suicide is already an epidemic why would one want to legalize Assisted suicide?

Instead of legalising Voluntary Assisted Dying, I propose the following:

- Increased funding into good quality Palliative Care state wide. This includes in rural and remote areas, community services, Residential Aged Care facilities, Disability housing and Hospitals alike. There should be a push for better pain management and psychological management specifically to ensure those expected feelings of hopelessness and depression are treated.
- A push for early Palliative Care intervention which should be instigated from the start when a person is diagnosed with any form of terminal illness. This includes but is not limited to: Dementia, Multiple Sclerosis, Cancer, Heart Failure, COPD and Parkinson's Disease. In addition, it can be expanded to those who suffer life-changing injuries due to an accident such: quadriplegics with chronic pain.

- Public education should be provided in order to remove the stigma that Palliative Care is just for end of life care. Palliative Care is not just end of life care but good quality care that can be provided for numerous years to ensure a patient suffering with an incurable illness has the best quality of life they can.
- More honest and open discussions should be had with person's with incurable illnesses about their options and choices including treatment vs no treatment.
- Other specialist should be encouraging to utilize Palliative Care specialist's knowledge in providing supplemented care to a person with an incurable illness. Whether that person may live for another 50 years or 5 months.

Voluntary Assisted Dying is an obsession with having to control everything and a selfish act and completely goes against what we stand for as health professionals which is, to provide high quality genuine care! Thus, I strongly hope you (the committee) will take my submission into consideration when making decisions in relation to the Voluntary assisted Dying Bill. I certainly do not want to give up on people so easily and I plead with you to do the same.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.
Kind regards,

Sarah Deuble

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