
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 June 2021 7:00 PM
To: Health and Environment Committee
Subject: I oppose the "Voluntary Assisted Dying" Bill

Re: I oppose the "Voluntary Assisted Dying" Bill

Dear Health Committee Members,

I am extremely sad that the idea of legalised assisted suicide has come so far, that I feel compelled to write to you today to reconsider the push on legalising assisted suicide in our great state. I believe that this is a wrong path to go down, and I wish to voice my opposition to the "Voluntary Assisted Dying" Bill. If, however, in a democratic society, most people speak we are obliged to listen, but we should do so very carefully and protect society from itself as far as possible. If we have learnt anything from even our own Australian history, it is that we do not always get it right.

I would urge you to regard all life as sacred and to treasure it as such.

We know that as humans our emotions fluctuate and influence our decision more often than we care to admit, and to make a choice to end one's life may be similarly influenced and subject to these fluctuating emotions. In no way do I wish to take lightly the emotional and physical suffering that some people may endure because of terminal illness, but I do not think that ending one's life is a choice that we should enable by legislation and force upon other parties to participate in. I do believe that we should do all we can to provide such patients with all possible ways to alleviate the suffering as much as possible and palliative care should and could be expanded upon. If you wish to make assisted suicide available to patients a specific period out from their estimated demise, why not offer a level of palliative care for this same period?

If a patient contemplates the option of assisted suicide, there should at least be consultation with an expert psychiatrist to determine if there is other mental health treatment available that may benefit the patient. There may be other reasons for such a desire which has little to do with the actual illness itself. The risk exists that vulnerable patients may convince themselves (or be maliciously convinced by others) that it would be better for their families if they were not there because they do not 'want to be a burden'. I have personally seen this happen, and it is a real risk that a door may be opened here which was unintended. To regard life as useless or unworthy of living just because the end is drawing near is a mistake.

We rely on physicians to alleviate our stress, disabilities, and pain with an eye on a better life. One would hope that none of them enter their profession with an eye on causing in the death of a patient, but to delay the inevitable and ease our discomfort on our way to the end. To force them, against their conscience, to refer a patient for assisted suicide (at the patient's request) is morally and ethically wrong. At least grant a physician the option of abstaining from giving advise/referral if they object to it. You ask us to respect the choice that a patient wants to make to die, and similarly we should respect the choice a physician makes to step aside regarding this issue. A physician's job is to heal, not to kill.

I respectfully request that exemption be granted to organisations and institutions (the same as physicians) that are morally opposed to assisted suicide to be asked to play a part in this decision that may be taken to a person under their care. They should not be forced to refer a patient for assisted suicide or advise a patient about assisted suicide or be asked to have this happen on their premises or in their facilities. Neither should anyone be penalised for attempting to convince a person that life is worth living – even to the end. It stands to reason that if we spend so many resources on suicide prevention, that we regard this as something worthwhile to do. Why would we penalise anyone for trying to convince someone not to take their own life with or without assistance?

All of us have issues that we feel morally and ethically strong about, and it is a sad day when legislation is passed that criminalises a moral or ethical good. Today this may not be something that you feel this morally or ethically strong about, but tomorrow it may be. Would you not want the ability to say 'I decline to participate in this'? This is what we are asking you to consider should you wish to proceed along the path of legalising assisted suicide.

Sincerely,
Madelein Venter



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