

Health and Environment Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 1 July 2021 2:09 PM
To: Health and Environment Committee
Subject: I oppose the "Voluntary Assisted Dying" Bill

Categories: Submission

Re: I oppose the "Voluntary Assisted Dying" Bill

Dear Health Committee Members,

I am writing to request that the Health Committee reject the 'Voluntary Assisted Dying' Bill.

There are many concerns I have with this bill, including the following:

- There is no requirement that the ill person be referred to a specialist in their illness (such as oncology) or to a palliative care specialist, to see what other options could be for improving their quality of life, or giving them a comfortable and painless last few weeks or months before their body naturally dies.
- The procedure and the patient's life is treated very cheaply - the Premier is pushing for euthanasia to be available via Telehealth, with no face-to-face contact involved
- Doctors with a conscientious objection to euthanasia or assisted suicide would be forced to refer patients for it, and therefore be complicit in the outcome of a patient killed.
- Health institutions whose charter is opposed to euthanasia (i.e. Catholic Health Australia and UnitingCare as well as many others) would be compelled to refer patients who qualify for euthanasia or assisted suicide upon request. In the case where the patient is a permanent resident of a facility, like an aged care home for example, the institution would be forced to let the assisted suicide or euthanasia take place on the premises by an outside doctor coming in to kill the patient or the poison being delivered to the facility.
- No mental health checks. There is no requirement for those requesting assisted suicide to be assessed by a mental health expert like a psychiatrist, yet mental anguish and depression is often one of the main drivers for requests for euthanasia, as data from other jurisdictions shows.
- The Bill allows people with a prognosis of 12 months to access assisted suicide. In other Australian jurisdictions the legislation stipulates a six month prognosis, so it allows access six months earlier than all other assisted suicide legislation in Australia.
- This Bill is anti-life, and if medical professionals, family or friends try to talk their loved one out of assisted suicide, for medical, religious or any other reasons, they could end up in jail for up to 7 years.
- Death certificates would be falsified for people who access assisted suicide to record their underlying sickness as the cause of death instead of suicide or euthanasia.
- The Palliative Care situation in Queensland is woeful, with only 134 dedicated beds, and 1/3 the needed staff. Medical professionals have said that in the vast majority of cases, pain in terminal illness cases is very possible to manage, with the few exceptions being possible to treat with some level of sedation to manage pain and help them be comfortable. The focus on legislation and funding should be on giving Queenslanders, regardless of whether they live in urban or rural/outback areas, adequate medical support for

them to be comfortable and have valuable time with their loved ones through the last weeks or months of their life, rather than introduce legislation which would pressure them to end their lives.

- Legalising Euthanasia statistically increases non-assisted suicides. Queensland already has almost the highest suicide rate in Australia. In Victoria, in the year after assisted suicide was legalised, the non-assisted suicide rate increased by 13%, and in Canada since euthanasia was legalised in 2016, the total number of suicides (both assisted suicide and non-assisted suicide) increased by 400% over just four years. The Netherlands has recorded an increase in non-assisted suicides of 10% since it legalised euthanasia in 2008.

- Almost all the national medical bodies disagree with Euthanasia: The Australian Medical Association, Nurses Professional Association of Queensland, and 107 out of 109 national medical bodies are opposed to euthanasia of any kind.

On a personal note, my father died of metastatic melanoma 8 years ago. He lived approximately 6 months from prognosis. That time was incredibly short, and incredibly precious both to him and to all of us, and his death came naturally, and gently, with wonderful palliative care and adequate pain relief, despite it being an incredibly painful disease. Doctors and nurses were constantly pushing him, from the time of his diagnosis, to give a consent to a non-resuscitation order, and it felt, for him and all of us, like the people we were reliant on to help and care for him at that time simply wanted him dead and out of their way, it was utterly horrific. I hate to imagine what that situation would have been like if Euthanasia was legal - a man and his family trying to cherish every brief day they have together, and society and the government and medical profession pressuring them to cut it short in a horrible, induced death. Please hear my story, and consider the importance of embracing life - every day of it - that we are given, knowing that it is very possible, with adequate funding and care, for those final days to be dignified and comfortable, while cherishing the life that is still there.

Sincerely,
Maree Kilpatrick