

Submission into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021

Submission No.: 1204

Submitted by: Lesley Hughes

Publication: Making the submission and your name public

Position: I/We do not support the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill

Comments in relation to: The request and assessment process, Conscientious objection by either individuals or entities

Attachments: See attachment

Submitter Comments:

Submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Health Committee re

Voluntary Assisted Dying.

As a retired nurse who worked in Aged Care for many years, and as an ordinary citizen and a daughter, I have been considering the issue of Euthanasia for quite a number of years. It is a very complex issue and definitely cannot be rushed through. Our Premier says she wants to hear from Queenslanders and so I am finally motivated to make a submission.

I wish to state that I do not support Euthanasia, or Voluntary Assisted Dying as the Government likes to call it. These are my reasons:

- As a retired Aged Care Professional I can bring to mind several aged people who were at risk of coercion to request euthanasia, mostly by close relatives, who would use overt or subtle manipulation to achieve their ends, both to get rid of the person who they perceive as a burden and an inconvenience, and to get access to an inheritance, having already spent the pension or other supports to which they had access. Yes, full on abuse which the aged person could not fully perceive.
- I was also an advocate for good palliative care for my dying patients; good and timely pain relief given with compassion and respect for the dying patient. I see that Palliative Care Queensland is asking for more realistic and adequate funding for Palliative Care and I definitely endorse that request. Is it right, or ethical, to offer euthanasia to the dying and vulnerable, when we cannot even commit to funding for good palliative care for them? This is not a choice in my view, but rather a desperate cry for help.
- Now as a daughter: My father died in a very undignified way more than 30 years ago. Maybe this memory contributes to my passion for better palliative care and people being allowed to die with dignity. He died, somewhat because of some problems during surgery, in a way that was totally abhorrent to me. He was not asking for euthanasia, but he made it clear to me that he never wanted to be put on life support or have artificial interventions that would stop him from dying in a natural way. He eventually died of a cardiac arrest but he was being kept alive with tubes hanging from every orifice and machines taking over from organs shutting down, his abdomen laid open and packed with swabs. I pleaded with them to let him go. This was not euthanasia but it was not palliative care either. It was cruel and seriously flawed. Thank goodness, shortly after this, we were allowed an Advance Health Directive. I truly believe that most people would prefer a natural and dignified dying, as pain free as possible, in comfortable surroundings with no artificial interventions.
- One more thing: This bill puts health professionals in a very difficult place. I believe that the AMA is not in favour of it. While it requires two doctors to agree that the requesting patient fits the criteria, that the request is staged and the patient can change their mind, I also see that a Health Professional who has a conscientious objection is required to refer the patient on to another health professional who will deliver the drugs of death and that makes them complicit in the death. I wonder if there is any opportunity to counsel against the assisted dying as the bill says 'they are not to hinder the patient's right to the scheme'.
- On a final note, I see such a contradiction in this proposed legislation. On the one hand we are trying to reduce the high incidence of suicide in our community, yet we are making suicide acceptable with this bill.

Yours sincerely,
Lesley Hughes (Mrs)