

Submission into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021

Submission No.: 1245

Submitted by: Janette Dobson

Publication: Making the submission and your name public

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

Comments in relation to: Conscientious objection by either individuals or entities

Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

In our ordinary everyday lives we make many decisions, some of which are casual, while others require more oversight and concentration.

In the process of this decision making, we may often seek the advice of others. While this advice may be limited in the case of minor decisions, we often consult others when making more difficult choices, or when we want to ensure that we are making the best possible choice in the circumstances. It is an everyday part of life to consult with others in this regard.

What I find extremely difficult to accept with the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 is that this consultation process is removed and even punishable by law in the proposed legislation.

Consultation is a recognised form of decision making in our ordinary, everyday lives. For example we visit our doctor if we wish to obtain health advice; we seek legal advice from a solicitor; we may seek out a real estate agent if we want to purchase or sell a property and we seek their guidance and expertise. Counselling is also widely recognised as an important aspect of growth in the personal and spiritual life, and practitioners are reimbursed by the Australian Medicare system.

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 proposes that seeking to use this natural form of counsel with probably the most important decision of a person's life, namely whether to proceed with euthanasia, would render the person who provides that counsel to be in infringement of the Bill and therefore to be acting illegally. This is to deny a person who is contemplating ending their life, the right to obtain all the relevant information they need to fully consider their actions and therefore to act in a full and conscious manner.

Providers of counsel or advice in any other sector of a person's life are not subject to these draconian conditions. In fact, society encourages us to seek such advice to ensure we are getting the best possible outcomes. I strongly object to the inclusion of this condition in the proposed Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021. This inclusion in the Bill precludes a person from seeking full and frank information that could assist them in making a balanced decision.

As a State, we are being advised to check on each other to ensure that we are well and healthy in both mind and body. The RUOK program is adequate proof of the success of this initiative. We are constantly reminded of the support services available should we need them or should others need them. Advertisements for Beyond Blue, Mates for Mates, Lifeline and other organisations are largely prominent in our lives. We recognise the need to make decisions that are balanced and ensure we prioritise lifegiving options. During this time of pandemic with Covid-19, we are being urged to support each other by being vaccinated. It is normal and natural that we seek advice and counsel in many of the decisions we make. Why should it be different when making possibly the most important life decision ever?

I can readily understand if a person has a terminal illness with a limited life expectancy and wishes to seek advice. Why should they not be allowed to seek advice from whatever source they decide will provide them with the information they seek? Why is the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 so prescriptive that it prevents any advice except suicide from being provided?

Palliative Care, if funded appropriately, can enable a person to continue living in a dignified and relatively pain-free manner until their natural death. As a State, we owe it to our residents to provide adequate palliative care to each and every person, so that no one has to consider euthanasia and end their life before their natural time.