

Health and Environment Committee

Parliament House

George Street

Brisbane. Qld. 4000.

hec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Members of the Committee,

Ref: Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021

I write to you to express my concerns about certain management and safeguarding provisions contained in the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 (the bill) currently before the Health and Environment Committee (the committee).

There are many people in Queensland concerned about this bill, particularly vulnerable middle-aged and handicapped people, concerned that "Forced Assisted Dying" will eventually become normal practice. For this reason, I request the committee reviews the proposed control and safeguarding mechanisms in the bill to give greater protection to the most vulnerable in society.

The bill creates the Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board with responsibility for the administration of the proposed act, and future voluntary assisted dying regulations in Queensland, no doubt modelled on the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board. I feel this structure requires further consideration. As you are no doubt aware, boards were common management, marketing and control tools commonly used in Westminster countries and very popular in Queensland during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many government boards that no longer exist include the Butter Marketing Board, Fish Marketing Board, Queensland Racing Board, Darling Downs Rabbit Board, and the Public Service Board.

The purpose of government boards is to establish an administrative structure to give a degree of independence to enable particular government functions to operate outside departments at arms-length from a minister of the crown. The problem with boards is they lack permanency, very quickly multiply which often results in future governments abolishing them to save money. In 2009, following an administrative review, the then Queensland Government abolished over 100 boards. More details about boards can be found by referring to the following link:

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-04-22/qld-govt-to-abolish-more-than-100-boards/1658882?utm\\_campaign=news-article-share-control&utm\\_content=mail&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-04-22/qld-govt-to-abolish-more-than-100-boards/1658882?utm_campaign=news-article-share-control&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)

In order to create greater permanency for organisations, modern practice is to use the commission model, often headed by a commissioner, instead of a board, to oversee and administer those areas of government administration where there is danger that individual rights and freedoms may be impinged upon. Other jurisdictions also use parliamentary committees for this purpose.

(page 2)

There are many people in Queensland extremely concerned about the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, euthanasia in general, and the effect the slippery slope principle will have on creating very different legislation than was originally passed by parliament and leading to Forced Assisted Dying laws. The Netherlands and Belgium are two good examples where the original euthanasia laws, containing lots of safeguards, have been watered down over the years.

I request members of the Health and Environment Committee consider the following suggestions to improve the administration of the safeguards contained in the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021:

1. Recommend the replacement of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board with a Voluntary Assisted Dying Safeguards Protection and Training Commission, headed by a commissioner.
2. Recommend the appointment of a Queensland Voluntary Assisted Dying Commissioner responsible and answerable to the Queensland Parliament similar to the Queensland Electoral Commissioner model.
3. Recommend the Queensland Parliament consider the establishment of a Parliamentary Voluntary Assisted Dying Committee, based on the Crime and Corruption Committee model, to oversee and review the activities of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Safeguards Protection and Training Commission. Such a parliamentary committee would assist the vulnerable in society to feel safer that end of life procedures will not be forced on them instead of palliative care.

Yours faithfully,



(Paul Barry)