

Health and Environment Committee

From: Jos Hall [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 1 July 2021 11:38 PM
To: Health and Environment Committee
Subject: Jos Hall - personal submission to the Health and Environment Committee

Categories: Submission

Health and Environment Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane Qld 4000

This is my personal submission which will be informal and as I have contributed to the Dying With Dignity Qld submission it will be brief. Many of my comments are based on my forty eight years working as a registered nurse, the death of my own parents and stories that I have heard from members of Dying With Dignity Queensland.

I would firstly like to state that I support the proposed VAD legislation as tabled by the Qld Premier in parliament.

I would like to comment on a number of specific issues:

- Palliative care. I very strongly support palliative care. I believe that palliative care in Southeast Queensland is as good as to anywhere in the world. I strongly support increased funding for regional and remote areas as I have heard appalling stories of the lack of palliative care in some of these regional and remote areas.
- Twelve months to expected death. The six-month default time frame in other states discriminated against many chronic diseases where people suffer, sometimes for years. A twelve-month timeframe allows people who are considering requesting VAD, time to complete the registration process without feeling time pressures. Of all the (many) people I know or have known, who have or have had, a terminal disease, I do not know one who I believe would choose to end their life while they have even a reasonable quality of life. It is human nature to want to live as long as possible.
- Doctors must be able to initiate a discussion on VAD. Presentation of all options is essential to allow a carefully considered decision to be made.
- People who live in retirement villages and nursing homes managed by “entities” that do not support VAD. When a person lives in a facility such as a retirement village or nursing home, that is their home. My mother lived in a retirement village in Sydney for over 10 years, and then in a nursing home in Canberra and finally in a nursing home in Berry NSW. These were all wonderful places, and she certainly considered them her home. She supported VAD and would probably not have chosen to live in those facilities had VAD been legal but prohibited in her “home”.
- VAD is not suicide. People who use VAD are dying. VAD allows them a choice – not whether they die or not, but how they die.

- Registered nurses with specific training should be involved. This will be essential in rural and remote areas. I note that research shows that nurses support VAD more than doctors do. After forty-eight years nursing, I am not surprised. How many doctors have spent more than a few minutes with their dying patients. I will always remember listening to them, their beseeching eyes, hearing then ask, "can't you give me something?", and their eyes become dull when I said "no". I am no longer a Registered Nurse, but if I was, I would apply to do the VAD training immediately it became available.

Personal notes from my family

My father died from bowel cancer in 1980. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I refused as I was not prepared to be implicated in his death. I know many people who have been asked for similar assistance by a dying family member. Most, but not all refuse. My father had friends who were industrial chemists. He died extremely quickly after saying goodbye to my mother and sister. [REDACTED]

My mother died in 2017. She was 98, but mentally completely aware and alert. She had MRSA in an ulcer on her leg. She knew her rights and after a discussion with her doctor, she made the decision to stop her IV antibiotics. She then stated that she had a lot of pain and asked for analgesics. She died 24 hours later from septicaemia.

I use these two people to show what is happening now. People will not suffer if they can avoid it, and if the law says they must suffer, they will make their own decisions. I have known many people who, I believe have found their own solution to their suffering.

Sincerely

Jocelyn (Jos) Hall
[REDACTED]