

Health and Environment Committee

From: Nicole Grove [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 1 July 2021 11:59 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 write this letter as a medical doctor and mother of three children. I have deep concerns about the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill and what it means for the future of society in Queensland, specifically, for how life is viewed and valued by both young and old. I write this as someone who has studied the causes and impact of suicide, has raised money for suicide prevention services and tried diligently to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues. I have lost several very dear friends and colleagues to suicide and the impact on loved ones, families, workplaces and communities is devastating and long-reaching. As a state we invest in mental health services, endeavouring to prevent people taking this heartbreaking route, believing sincerely that there is a better way, that life is valuable and worth fighting for. To legalise Voluntary Assisted Dying equates to legitimising suicide as a reasonable option for anyone who is suffering, tired of life, in need of help that they believe may be out of their reach or who feels like a burden to those around them. If suicide is presented as a reasonable option in these circumstances, it will soon be considered reasonable in other circumstances and, as has happened in other countries, our suicide rate - including our youth suicide rate - will rise. If it were to pass, this Bill would change how our society views life: is it to be fought for? Protected? Is it valuable? Or is it to be discarded when we are tired of it? Something not worth fighting for when it is in danger? When a person is giving up hope will we put in the hard yards to support them through their suffering or will we not bother and encourage them to just throw in the towel because it's easier? This happens routinely in the Netherlands; people are now more likely to choose euthanasia because they believe they are a burden than because they have intractable pain.

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill simply does not offer protection for the vulnerable in this age of increasing elder abuse. While I believe there is insufficient protection for the vulnerable in this Bill when the decision can be made by junior doctors, via Telehealth and without any involvement of a medical specialist, I passionately believe that were the Bill to be passed, that act alone would be enough to make vulnerable people who are suffering feel compelled to pursue suicide as a reasonable option. This would be a tragedy. I certainly do not want my children to grow up in such a society.

I urge you please to consider the long term implications that this legislation would have on our state's approach to life, mental health, hope and help, especially for those who are suffering and vulnerable as well as for our future generations.

There are better ways forward. There are avenues we can pursue regarding palliative care and important conversations to be had regarding our society's perspective on death and suffering. Please, please don't rush this decision. It will NOT be welcomed by the vast majority of health professionals and private hospitals for good reason: it undermines everything they stand for, everything they work for. It goes against the fundamental reason that health care exists: to help sustain life, not take it away. It goes against the principles of good palliative care: that a patient can be supported in their time of suffering to be comfortable and to die with dignity. To legalise euthanasia would imply that palliative care has little or nothing to offer, which is so far from the truth. This Bill would drastically change our society's view on the value of life and of caring for others. I urge you not to let it pass.

Sincerely,
Nicole Grove

