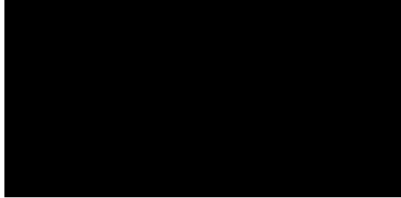


Lilian Topic  
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Submission from



Voluntary Euthansia Enquiry.

I am a sixty five year old woman, educated, intelligent, well read and informed and have made choices throughout my life. I currently enjoy good health and have everything to live for, a wonderful family, friends, books, films, music, a good and interesting life. Inevitably my body or my mind will let me down and I will no longer be able to enjoy this life. I have put in place an Advanced Care Directive, a Living Will and an Enduring Guardianship after much discussion with my family and friends, I have done everything that is legal to ensure I have some control at the end of my life. I am not afraid of dying but am certainly concerned about how I might get there. I have no desire to be kept alive beyond any quality by artificial means. I have accepted this wonderful life will come to an end. I do not want my dying drawn out nor do I wish to suffer or end my days in a nursing home.

I have been a member of Exit International for many years and more recently joined the Voluntary Euthanasia Party in the hope of changing the current laws which no longer meet the needs and wishes of the community as shown in opinion polls. Around 80% of people support a change in the legislation. In order to inform this debate we need to separate euthanasia from suicide. Euthanasia is a considered choice for someone who has a terminal illness, has exhausted all possible avenues for a cure and for whom palliative care has failed to alleviate their pain and suffering. There needs to be a teasing out of the suicide statistics to reflect those who are depressed and those who have made a rational choice. For anyone who is depressed they must be given all the treatment and support to ensure they find their way back to living and optimism. There is currently no cure for an inevitable death. In all my years as a member of the above organisations I have never met anyone who is depressed, this is a red herring used to derail the debate. When euthanasia is an option many people find enormous comfort in just knowing there is a way out if things become unbearable. They get on with what life they have left with confidence.

Many countries now have legalised euthanasia for the terminally ill, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, five states in America and most recently Canada. They have been able to frame their legislation and regulations to protect people from any exploitation. Australia has one of the most sophisticated legal systems in the world I am confident we would put adequate safeguards in place. Anyone enquiring into this issue needs to familiarise themselves with the above jurisdictions to again protect the debate from talk of genocide, killing people to gain inheritance and threats to the disabled. These sorts of abuses do not take place where euthanasia is legal.

Australia is a secular society where religion should have no place in framing social policy. I am an atheist so am not bound by any worries about punishment or suffering in an afterlife. I respect people's beliefs and only ask that my beliefs attract the same respect. Euthanasia will be voluntary only for those who request it. We currently have a shortage of organs for donation, no life is prematurely ended to supply this demand, the proper protections are in place.

I am now in the position where a close relative is in the end stage of melanoma. They would like to pass away before the ravages, blindness, incontinence, physical and mental disability destroy their quality of life. They feel abandoned by the medical profession who can offer no assistance to die when they've had enough. To ensure they have a timely death we may have to break the law, suicide is not illegal but assisting anyone is. If they decide to take their own life they will have to die alone, this is what is currently causing them the most grief. If we allowed an animal to suffer as many of us will at the end of life we'd be prosecuted.