

Submission to: Inquiry on End Life Choices.

Date: 12 July 2015

My name is John Hitchens

I am 66 years of age and have been diagnosed with metastasised Prostate cancer of the bladder. My prostate was removed in 2005 and I have had salvage radiation in 2007 and Stereotactic radiation to the spine in 2014. I also have areas of arthritis that at times cause pain. However, other than these things I am in relatively good health and can at times be quite active. The medical profession only has hormone therapy, more surgery, maybe chemo to offer, when my PSA rises sufficiently. These treatments have such an effect on quality of life that they are worse than the disease, and generally the medical profession will admit that. I am pursuing other therapies meanwhile.

It has always been my desire that when the end comes I should have the right to choose how that end should be, when pain, organ failure and the inability to live with dignity, becomes overwhelming.

What experience do I have of death?. I had a fairly large 84 acre hobby farm and had to deal with sheep attacked by dogs or other injuries, and my own, and my childrens' pet dogs. I would never let animals suffer when I knew either from experience or a vets diagnosis that there was no hope.

My father died in 1994 at the age of 76. He lived in Sydney and I, at that time lived in Bendigo. He had been a heavy smoker until the age of 56 but stopping smoking did not save him. He was found to have cracked his hip bone – he said the only thing he remembered was using his hip to bump the car door closed, and it hurt a bit. He was very tough man, and got around for a couple of months before finally deciding to go to the doctor. Of course Xrays and medical suspicion about why the hip would crack revealed that he was riddled with cancer in the bone with a major shadow in his lungs.

He went into rehab for a few months then came home. I had spoken to my local GP who said he would give him 6 months given what I had told him re my father diagnosis. About 6 months after the diagnosis my father rang me and said I can't do this any-more mate. I rang the district nurse -she was glad that I rang as she had been getting more and more concerned. He was sent to a prominent cancer Hospital and died two weeks later. The hospital was actually wonderful in his treatment. The only problem was that the medication to control the pain, meant after the first few days we were not able to communicate or understand what he was actually saying, when clearly his very strong mind and his expressions meant he had things to say, but the medication prevented it.

I had always supported voluntary euthanasia and here in my own life experience it was confirmed.

As another submission stated: "I want the same compassion that we extend to a suffering animal, to be extended to me. I want my life to be worth as least as much as a dog. I want to choose when to go, and I want to be able to discuss it with my family, explain why I want to go, and obtain their understanding. I want to give them closure".

I want to say the things that need to be said, I want to tell them how much I love them. Some may say do those things now, and yes I will try. We are a tough breed of men and those things don't come easily. I have three sons aged 36, 35 and 33.

This is a matter where the rights of the people must be heard. Australians, generally, have lost complete faith in politicians. At least get this right.

Thankyou, for enabling me to make this submission.

Regards

*John Hitchens*