

09 September 2015  
[REDACTED]

To:-  
Lillian Topic / Secretary  
Legal and Social Issues Committee  
State Parliament of Victoria  
VIC 3002

Sub: *'End of Life choices'* - Committee Hearing

Dear Lillian,

Thank-you for accepting my submission on this most important *'Life and Death'* issue. It is a matter very *'close to my heart'* from personal and professional experiences during the past 50 years.

Way back in the 1960's my nursing/medical peers always considered ***Dying with Dignity*** as our first and prioritised goal. The establishing of hospice and palliative care, appropriate medical/nursing intervention, and participatory family involvement, were in their infancy. Therefore with limited resources and utmost dedication we were determined to ensure the patient would experience ***\*Dying with Dignity through a Celebration of Life.***

From our first to our last breath, it is a continual struggle of **Life over Death**. Through a myriad of encounters, each and every one of us is called upon to overcome the ongoing challenges of everyday life. Frequently, and with at times EXTRA ordinary courage, we face each day. However, 'death' inevitably 'stands' at the end of our way.

For 46 years I was a Registered Nurse experiencing 'first hand' this mighty struggle of **Life over Death**. It was always my task to support and assist my fellow humans to livingly and courageously embrace this mystery of Life, no matter what the outcome.

If it meant the power of disease and death inevitably overcoming the struggle for life, I would ensure, especially as a Charge Nurse, that the best palliative care be administered within existing conditions. This meant that family members and friends were encouraged to participate in nurturing, caring and supporting their 'loved one' as much as possible.

Within medical and nursing parameters, it meant the patient remained comfortable, was hydrated and adequate pain relief was always available. This moment we all inevitably 'face, would then become a unique ***Celebration of Life.***

On the other hand if it meant a return to a state of health, and a degree of life was possible, I would promote all possible healing modalities to bring this about. Time and again, I would notice professionally and personally the challenge to **embrace life** in all situations, was a valuable inspiration for friends and family.

2/

Death was **never** seen as the ultimate victor over Living; it was seen as no more, no less than the 'finishing line' in our struggle for life. Dying *naturally* with Dignity, and with the utmost care possible, always became the focus for a "*true celebration and rejoicing of life.*"

Yours Sincerely,



Mr. Grahame Millar  
Bayswater Vic.

\* It is now disconcerting to witness how the pro-euthanasia groups have sequestered these time honoured words, *Dying with Dignity*, for their own nefarious ends.

To –

Committee of *'End of Life choices'*  
State Parliament of Victoria  
Victoria 3002

Dear Committee Members

Sub: *'End of Life choices' meetings 2015/16*

Please consider the following submission for Committee and final Parliamentary consideration next year.

Speaking from a professional perspective, spanning a period of 46 years as a Registered General/Psychiatric Nurse, in Social Work and as a Private Counsellor, I have experienced and frequently worked with my fellow humans within the processes of *living and dying*.

My work has covered Frail Aged Care, various organisational and community Mental Health work, and working with 'dysfunctional family and family members' and persons with chronic physical disabilities.

I also speak from a personal perspective where my father, and later my older brother, committed suicide; and also where my paternal aunt attempted suicide.

Whenever confronted with the multiplicities of fellow humans dying suddenly, or over weeks months or years, I have always observed significant differences in the response of all 'parties' concerned. These differences are the *'definitive moment'*; whether there is a courageous *Dying with Dignity and Joyful Celebration of Life*, or a life ending out of fear, rejection or non acceptance in what it means to naturally live and die within our journey of life.

In the area of voluntarily and suddenly dying, my father's body was riddled with terminal cancers, yet my mother was determined to care for him at home until his last breath. The year was 1978 where there was limited hospice and nursing care, and where their doctor did not adequately prescribe pain relief drugs. In what he considered to be an 'act of compassion', my father shot himself in the head when my mother was shopping in town. For the next 25 years, she always felt emotionally and deeply unfulfilled that she was unable to nurture and care for her beloved husband until his last breath.

With my older brother, he was a long term alcoholic with prolonged bouts of heavy drinking. Because of feeling a failure in his marriage, with employment, raising his four children and unsuccessfully participating in group therapy sessions, he could see no way forward with what he considered a 'terminal disease'; despite being relatively physically fit. He 'copycatted' my father's suicide, but with a homemade gun. It meant a long and agonised dying over a number of hours where he was partly conscious, realising the mistake he had made. He pleaded he did not want to die in this forced manner; however death was inevitable. There was no celebration of life or dying with dignity. The year was 2001!

2/

After having four boys, miscarrying with a female foetus, dealing with an alcoholic husband and demanding 'live-in' mother-in-law, my Aunty attempted suicide through a drug overdose. However she 'failed', was embraced as 'extended family' in a local community church group, and became a shining inspiration for ***embracing life in all circumstances***. She also developed multiple cancers from a primary lung cancer, and **received expert hospice care together with appropriate medical pain relief**.

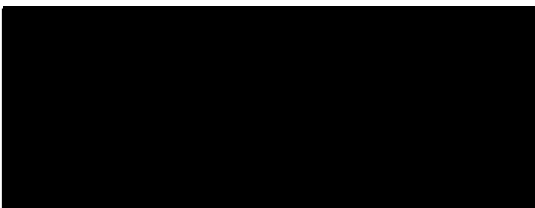
Surrounded, supported and nurtured by close family, extended family and her local church 'family', she *celebrated her life with them and died with dignity*. The most **EXTRAordinary and uniquely caring qualities of compassion, caring and unreserved love**, unfolded from all persons who had a part to play in these moments of her life. The year was 2003!

These personal experiences have had a deep and profound effect upon my professional life in Charge Nurse positions, whenever I was confronted with a dying patient. I would insist and ensure family and invited extended family and friends had as much unreserved access as possible, that all nursing requirements were fully met, and that there was always 'around the clock' pain relief and management. Family members and friends would 'blossom' in unfolding the previously mentioned personal EXTRAordinary qualities and unique caring, in ensuring there was a ***Celebration of Life and Dying with Dignity***.

Over the decades I also began to realise that these inherent EXTRAordinary qualities are within each and everyone of us. They are able to become an inspirational '*guide*' in *confronting our own personal challenges in the face of adversity, in whatever shape and form it takes place*.

Professional and personal 'feedback' over the years, clearly indicates there has always been sincere and genuine acknowledgement from the deceased's family and others. It becomes a clear affirmation that when appropriate nursing/medical/community palliative care is in place, then opportunities for these EXTRAordinary qualities to unfold, become an inspirational 'mainstay' in dealing with these inevitable life issues. Then what can unfold is the opportunity to **naturally and truly *Die with Dignity and with a Celebration of a Life from all persons concerned***.

Yours Sincerely,



Grahame Millar (Mr.)

