



27th August, 2015.

Lilian Topic, Secretary,
The Legal & Social Issues Committee,
Parliament House,
Spring St.,
Melbourne 3002.

Dear Madam,

I wish to make the enclosed submission to the
"Inquiry into End of Life Choices."

Yours faithfully,



Submission to the “ Inquiry into End of Life Choices”.

From – Mary B. Kavanagh, [REDACTED]

I do not think that we should make Legislative change which would allow assisted suicide or euthanasia.

Instead , our aim should be to provide the best possible palliative care. Resources should be made available to extend the availability and quality of this care.

If our society is prepared to condone the suicide of aged or terminally ill people, it will weaken or make redundant current suicide prevention endeavours. Where do we draw the line? - a line which has become very blurred in other jurisdictions e.g. Belgium. Such action serves to change the public conscience.

It is reported (Bioedge 20/6/2015) that in Belgium the number of euthanasia and assisted suicide deaths has increased by 150% in the past 5 years , and, whilst most patients had cancer , people had been euthanized because they had autism, anorexia, borderline personality disorder, chronic fatigue syndrome, partial paralysis, blindness coupled with deafness, and manic depression. The legislation there has also now been extended to encompass children, I believe.

I refer you to an article in The Age 27/5/2015 by Consultant Psychiatrist, John Buchanan, who considers that legalizing Voluntary Euthanasia would place dangerous pressure on people to use that law. He reports that a recent Scottish Parliamentary Committee examining a Bill to legalise assisted suicide stated , “ There is no way to guarantee the absence of coercion in the context of assisted suicide.”

That same Committee also recently observed, “ The principle of respect for autonomy is a qualified principle which is usually limited by the rights of others, by public safety considerations, and by the need to consider other principles and values.”

Dutch Medical Ethicist, Theo Boer, who was a supporter of the Dutch Legislation, wrote in Britain’s Daily Mail (and was reported on television here) - “ But now, with 12 years of experience, I take a different view.”

We must preserve the role of the doctor as a healer and carer.

None of us want to be a burden on our families, nor do we want to watch our loved ones suffering. However, such legislation would mean that the most vulnerable people in our community may be coerced or pressured to end their lives, to avoid being a burden on others or the health system

Heart-rending and difficult as it may be to observe the frailty and illness of loved ones or those in our care, without that part of life’s experience I fear that as human beings we will risk losing our capacity for compassion and consequently suffer a reduction in our very humanity.