

Dawn Robson
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Legislative Council Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues
re Inquiry into End of Life Choices

Dear Committee Members

I think that - We have a better educated population
We have a more questioning population
We have an aging population
We are supposedly a secular society
Public attitudes to dying, and to any afterlife are changing

My mother strongly believed in dignity for herself and respect for others. She was a member of the then Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Victoria. She made sure that Advance Directives and Refusal of Medical treatment certificates were signed. She believed that these would be respected. She would have been devastated at her final state of being.

She was fed by 'someone'
She couldn't walk
She couldn't see
She urinated involuntarily
She was slung up over a toilet to defecate
She was placed in a wheeley bed to be moved; sometimes to where there were other people similarly affected, but younger and much noisier, yelling ever present.
She could hear.

Shortly before dementia completely overcame her, she was in hospital and developed pneumonia. Despite the documentation and my requests as Medical Attorney to cease medication, the young doctor persisted and she recovered - the pneumonia was reversible.

The dementia and blindness were not.

Prior to the above hospital experience, and after she'd had to move to a higher care facility, she wept and asked why she was in gaol, what had she done to be there?

Her dignity and autonomy were disregarded. Why?

Now we come to 'pain', which can be relieved, the cost is often nausea, vomiting and sometimes frightening hallucinations. But in some cases the pain cannot be overcome. My stepfather had cancer, a very fast growing one and he died a dreadful death; his neck finally the same size as his head. The pain and the battle with it, loud and horrible. Palliative care was not an option. Had he been a farm animal we would have, out of compassion, ended such misery.

But we couldn't. Why?

The Medical profession has unprecedented power to prolong life. People are fearful of such power.

Why will the State not acknowledge the wishes of those who anticipate death and attempt, in good faith, to ensure that it is a dignified and peaceful one ?

To die intestate is regarded as foolish

A will, for decisions regarding ones possessions is legally binding.

A will, for end of life decisions with regards to ones body, should surely enjoy the same, if not more legal respect?

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