

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 28 July 2015 2:54 PM
To: LSIC
Subject: end of life choices

Good afternoon

I am writing from New South Wales and would like to congratulate you on conducting an inquiry into end of life choices, and to offer my opinion.

My father died, aged 91, around a year ago. He was fortunate to have retained his mental faculties which allowed him to loudly and clearly express to his doctor that he did not wish to have any further life extending treatments. He had completed an Advanced Care Directive which my mother and his four children had all signed. He had been allocated a palliative care team so that everything would be in place should he reach the stage where his doctor would recommend that he go to the palliative care hospital – he had point blank refused to go to any other hospital. He was a long-term member of the Voluntary Euthanasia society.

My dad had a Veteran's Gold Card and a multitude of disabling, but not terminal, illnesses. He was terrified and depressed by the fact that he couldn't die, didn't have the guts (or the means if the truth be known) to commit suicide, and may end up in a nursing home. He desperately wished for some Nembutal. He possibly would not have taken it, but it would have given him a lot of peace to know that option was available.

Before he went to palliative care (where he died within days) Dad weighed a bit over 50 kg. His pathetically skinny legs were black. He bruised almost when touched. He had a colostomy bag but had to wear 'nappies' because his 'bum leaked'. He could no longer get on his four wheeler and do the shopping. He felt he had totally lost his dignity, his independence, indeed his usefulness. His list of illnesses filled pages. He was in an incredible amount of pain. He told us we should be glad, not sad, when he died and we all were. It was just so awful seeing someone you cared about in such a situation month after month. He didn't believe in god or any afterlife. He said he had had a good life. Just didn't want to be here anymore because it was too awful.

I am 66 now and I don't want to end my life that way. I don't want to suffer that level of pain and humiliation. Many of my friends who have watched their parents suffer feel the same. I know others feel differently. My brother has a grade 4 brain tumor and his wife just wants him alive – that's their decision and I am happy for them to do what they feel is right for them. They have religious beliefs.

If governments persist with the idea that we should not be assisted to die with dignity, then I am sure there will be (1) an increase in suicides among older people and (2) a thriving black market in Nembutal or an increase in oldies heading to Kings Cross to pick up some heroin in the hope they can overdose.

I strongly believe that end of life choices should include medical assistance to die even if your only terminal illness is very old age. I hope you get some legislation through the Parliament.

Regards

Rhonda Garven
 [REDACTED]

