

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into End of Life Choices

Mr Paul Scherek

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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I have watched terminally ill people die by both natural causes and by assisted suicide. I offer the following observations.

22 years ago I watched my 34 year old spouse die slowly and agonisingly of multiple myeloma. This is a form of cancer similar to leukemia. It attacks the blood plasma, and amongst other things can cause spontaneous bone fractures. My spouse was a nurse, and knew well the likely course of her illness. She was able to obtain a large quantity of opiate based pain killer, and we had agreed that I would assist her and support her when she felt it time to take a fatal dose. This she decided upon within days of her spinal discs exploding because of the pressure of the cancerous growth of her plasma. Anyone can guess the pain. As it happened, her mother intervened and whisked her off to a catholic hospital where she suffered five days of living hell before she finally passed into a coma. Her very last words to me were "God mum is full of shit. Please don't fight with her until after I am dead". This was the final thought of a loving daughter after her mother denied her a peaceful death.

I contrast this with my mothers death from cancer 34 years ago. A compassionate doctor gave my father the means to end my mothers life peacefully in her home, surrounded by her family. When the time came, she called us (her sons and daughters-in-law) to her bedside, where we were all able to say good-bye, have a final laugh together, and to thank her for being an incredibly wonderful mother.

I understand that some people have religious convictions that prevent them from supporting assisted suicides, and by no means would I insist that they commit suicide. However, I deny them the right to tell me that I must not do so, simply because they do not wish to do so themselves. I am not of a religion that prevents suicide and I don't think it right that I should be dictated to by other religions.

I believe it is arrant wanton cruelty to force a person to live through suffering if they do not wish to do so. No one has the right to impose life or death decisions upon others.

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