

Inquiry Into End Of Life Choices

Submission To The Legal and Social Issues Committee of the Victorian Legislative Council

Submission from: [REDACTED]

Please Note: I request that my name and address (only) be kept confidential, as the specific circumstances of my mothers passing outlined below would be upsetting for my children.

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I am a fifty nine year old Australian Citizen (born in India) and have lived in Australia since 1969. Over the past 10 years, I have witnessed a number of family (including both my parents), and friends pass away through old age associated illnesses as well as some terminal conditions which claimed lives much too early.

In 2010 my elderly mother suffered a severe stroke which stripped her of her faculties as well as most of her movement. I was able to organize for her to be cared for extremely well in a high care unit in Melbourne, and whilst she had ups and downs, she was at times capable of expressing enjoyment and pleasure. Over the period of some six months, my mother's condition deteriorated to the point that she slipped into a coma and developed pneumonia.

After numerous examinations and consultations, the Doctors caring for her conveyed to us (her family), that it was certain that this was "end of life" for my mother. Over a period of four days, I sat and watched and listened to her struggling for breath and progressively drowning. Over the last two days of her "life", I sat by my mother's side and was there when she drew her last breath.

I ask the LSI Committee to consider the following key points:

1) Over the years, mother had clearly and frequently expressed her strong wish to not survive a severe incapacitation. She even specifically stated that she wanted not to prolong life at the cost of suffering, believed in voluntary euthanasia and wanted that option for herself. These were statements my mother made about her choice over her life and her death, made to numerous people ranging from myself, my brother, my father, her daughters in law, her grandchildren, and doctors. Discussions around her writing a legal statement with instructions to that effect, back when she was of sound mind and body, always ended in the conclusion that such a statement would be futile as voluntary euthanasia was not an option in Victoria and Australia, and consequently no doctor or medical agency would consider such instructions. In summary, my mothers strong wishes were clear and could have, under a differing and enlightened legal system, been verifiable beyond any doubt.

2) That my mother was at the end of her life with no prospect of recovery was accepted as a medical fact by Doctors, nurses and family, at least two days before her death.

3) There can be no doubt in the minds of Doctors, nurses, family and myself that the last two days of my mothers life were filled with the unbearable suffering and horror of a 48 hour long drowning.

4) At approximately 2.00am on the last morning of my mother's life (she passed at approximately 4.00pm), witnessing her pain and suffering, I considered taking my own action to end my mother's ordeal. This was and will remain one of the most traumatic decisions and moments in my life; feeling torn between what I knew to be my mother's strong wishes and love for her and the implications of such an action on my family and myself under the current laws. **No one** had the right to put my mother nor myself in that horrendous situation. I am still unsure that my decision to not take any action was the morally correct path.

5) It is evident from numerous credible surveys that around 76% of the Victorian population support voluntary euthanasia.

6) Our democratic system is based on the concept of "representation"; i.e. the people elect representatives to represent their views, values and aspirations. In conjunction with the previous point (5), how can any government of any political persuasion refuse to represent the wish of the majority?

7) Our society has accepted the notion of abortions based on the right of a woman to make decisions about her own body, even when this has obvious critical implications for her unborn child. Yet the same woman faced with a confirmed terminal illness, facing horrific suffering is not permitted to choose a dignified and humane end. Clearly significant legislative change is needed if we are to demonstrate moral and legal consistency.

8) Together with many others, I believe there is inordinate and subversive pressure brought to bear on both the legal and political systems from religious organisations who are theologically opposed to voluntary euthanasia. Governments and legal systems should be reminded that they are there to represent the electorate and society, not religious institutions.

## SUMMARY

When an individual, their family, their close friends, their medical teams and even legal representatives all agree that they are at the end of their life and facing a certain and painful death, who has the right to deny them the choice of how and when they will pass?

Furthermore, when over 70% of the population believe that people should have that choice, it is clearly time to change the relevant legislative framework to allow for a strictly controlled process of voluntary euthanasia.

If the committee thought it of value, I would be prepared to appear at a public hearing.

