


Stefan Kos


End of Life Choices Submission by Stefan Kos

My father – Mr Silvano Kos - died of cancer after a short illness of six months. Towards the end of that time the pain was barely manageable for him. Radiotherapy was too painful after the first treatment. The cancer was in-operable.

His main hope was through self-funded alternative naturopathy which was futile. Nevertheless it offered hope for a cure and attempts at managing the pain. Admission to the Austin hospital became necessary due to the acute pain but many hours were spent on trollies in hallways waiting for a bed. Even extra pillows were not available and had to be supplied from home.

From this experience I recommend that the quality of palliative care needs to be improved and more broadly available and responsive. Sufferers should not have to wait until the pain is too great to be administered palliative care.

At no stage did my father think about suicide or euthanasia. This issue of euthanasia should not be funded or even considered while the level of palliative care is below the recommended standards set by Palliative Care Australia – 1.5 full time equivalent palliative care specialists per 100,000 people. Current levels have been about 0.5 in most major cities and even as low as 0.2 in regional areas. This major underfunding of palliative care makes treatment of pain much more difficult and traumatic.

The euthanasia debate should not be surreptitiously used as an excuse for poor palliative care funding. Sufferers should not be left hopeless and desperate for choices so as to feel the only inevitable option is to hurry up the terminal prognosis by euthanasia.

The Government has a duty of care to its citizens to provide the best health, palliative care and welfare services to its people. The idea of euthanasia is philosophically incompatible with this duty of care. It will turn hospitals and hospices into mortuaries. People will be averse to going to them for fear of abuses and lack of credible and enforceable safe guards. Health care in general will suffer lowering standards.

The best “safe guard” is for all euthanasia to be illegal and punishable crimes. In countries such as Holland and Belgium, there are already hundreds of people each year that are involuntarily euthanized despite the “safe guards”.

Yours sincerely,

