

6 August, 2015

Lilian Topic  
Secretary, Legal & Social Issues Committee Parliament House,

Firstly, thank you for extending the deadline. I find it hard to write this but know I must, for the sake of ending the suffering such as my mother endured.

I could hear my mother howling before I entered the secure unit which was now her home. We didn't know why she did this; she had Alzheimer's, diagnosed at age 65. She died at this place in 2007, slowing choking to death as her throat muscles didn't work any more. Mum was distressed. My sister, a nurse, asked for a suction machine but we were told this was seen as palliative care so the nursing home didn't have one. The choice was to move Mum to a general hospital. What to do? How long was this going to take? Eileen, my mother, was on an intravenous morphine drip but this didn't stop her distress. We swabbed her mouth and held her hand. Her eyes, I cry as I write this, her eyes revealed a world where she didn't know why she was going through this agony. Mum died later that night.

When we were kids, she worked at Grace McKellar House, a nursing home, in Geelong. Mum would come home from work and say, "Don't ever put me in a place like that. Take me out the back and shoot me." I don't want to go through what my mother did. We knew she didn't. I want to have the choice of a death with dignity. I want changes to the current legislation so that I can write down my wishes and know that they will be respected and adhered to.

I am a member of Dying With Dignity Victoria and have DWD with the flower logo tattooed on my arm. I support voluntary euthanasia and wish to hell there was a way that would have saved my mother from her suffering.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Smith

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