

Mr Barry Duncalf

Euroa Health- Euroaville



Committee of Submissions – End of life Care

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am writing to you as a person, who for the last thirteen years has personally experienced the way we treat our terminally in aged Care.

Most people look forward to their retirement in their twilight years. It would be a sad day if we had to extend our retirement age so as to keep people alive against their wishes.

There was a case last year in Melbourne involving the deaths of two women, one terminally ill, the other perfectly healthy; this highlights the shortcomings of our present legislation.

A national law involving all states and territories is required, so that pressure can be taken off doctors, families and loved ones, in relation to terminal illness. The law would ensure that all Australians have the same rights.

I envisage that families and medical professionals would discuss this when the patient is still able, as the Medical Power of Attorney at present.

This would have the effect of removing the anxiety and trauma that arises for family and patient at an emotional time. It is the ultimate cruelty to keep people alive and locked away, feeding them a cocktail of drugs, when they have no hope of returning to a meaningful life and having expressed the wish, when in sound mind, to end their lives in a dignified and painless manner.

It is hypocritical to suggest that the right to life does not include the right to end that life, with dignity and compassion. The real pain, both physical and mental, of growing old with a debilitating terminal illness or dementia is bad enough, but to treat a person with drugs to extend that suffering is inhumane.

It's a sad fact that we treat our pets more humanely than we treat ourselves.

To say that there could be abuses are misleading as the same safeguards could be applied as presently exists for organ donations and Power of Attorney.

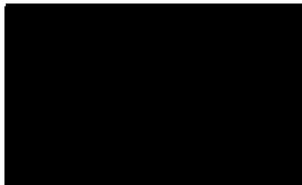
If this is established in law it would most probably considerably reduce the number of suicides. Knowing their wishes would be respected would remove much anxiety of ageing. It would also relieve the trauma for loved ones having to decide to put them into an aged care facility when they are no longer able to manage them at home.

This is not a plea to legalise suicide in any shape or form. It is a plea to allow a patient to exit their lives in a dignified and painless manner.

There is no doubt in my mind that if a referendum was initiated it would strongly support this view.

I would like to see a deputation from the committee to visit Euroaville, with a view to demonstrate these proposals.

Euroaville is one of the few establishments to be comprehensive in its method of care for the elderly. It has all of the factors i.e. high care, low care and dementia care and acute on the one site, it is about to start building a new 75 bed facility.



MR BARRY DUNCALF

