



Neville Swimmerton



28 July 2015

Legislative Council Standing Committee on Legal &  
Social Issues

Parliament House

Spring Street

Melbourne Vic. 3002

### End of Life Choices

Death is an extremely wide, complex & personal subject. Unless there has been a recent one in the family or a personal friend it is also extremely unpopular. For these & additional reasons it is also avoided by Federal & State parliaments.

However no adult person & no elected government can avoid the subject forever, & in Victoria it is dramatically overdue to review the State's current law. While accepting suicide the law makes it unlawful to assist anyone to die. In Roman Catholic hospitals & homes the law is kept. For all atheists, other christians & religious members, terminally ill patients can be assisted to die. Risks of such practice include doctors being reported & losing their authority to practice, being unable

to plan the time of death due to methods that avoid diagnosis & the person being unable to die in the presence of his/her selected family &/or friends.

The personal experience of dying varies for multiple reasons such as:

- age
- choice of time & methods
- loss & benefits to family & others

Different to all other major life decisions, once applied it is irreversible. Reasons for making the wrong decision are innumerable & include depression, loss of a loved one, personal problems apparently beyond control & feelings of guilt. Proof of their non-permanence however can only be experienced by challenging & denying the negative outlook & action. When done it is not uncommon for those who rejected suicidal thoughts to become emotionally grateful.

Everyone eventually dies however & for some, sooner would be of unquestionable benefit.

Medical technology has progressed so rapidly it is now possible to extend most lives for long periods. It is not however always the best & this is where the current law fails.

In Victoria & other States adults can legally choose to die, but no one is legally allowed to facilitate or assist. For the



incurably ill & dying elderly this denies them the appropriate freedom & support.

The solution suggested is practical & simple & should overcome endless discussion & lack of agreement. Basic essentials of the new law would be:

1. Diagnosis. To proceed with chosen termination a medical professional has to sign a diagnosis which diagnoses the individual with terminal illness & dying within six months.

2. Individual choice. All mental functioning adults diagnosed as above can choose if & when they wish to die sooner. If able they sign a legal document.

3. Confirmation. A chosen relative or friend signs the legal document confirming authenticity of the individual's choice to die.

For development of such a law the State government could select a small but select group of practical thinkers. Their sole task would be prepare the essential change of law which would be presented to Parliament for approval. Once implemented the State would be seen as the most progressive & practical. Individual freedom would be dramatically improved, & the State government would be historical

