



23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015

Dear Sirs and Mesdames,

Re: End-of-Life Treatment

The proposition that people should be able to fill out their end-of-life wishes is fraught with danger.

Firstly, indicating such wishes when one is in good health can lead to a patient being denied appropriate life-saving treatment for a condition that is eminently treatable. The patient is not a doctor and has no idea how he/she could cope with an illness or injury that may or may not occur in the future.

A classic example of a patient who most people expected to die, because of the very dangerous injuries he sustained, and who amazingly survived is the well known entertainer Molly Meldrum. He was in a coma for weeks after a fall from a ladder. If he had in his possession a properly filled out Advance Health Directive he certainly would not be alive today!

During World War II, the famous Australian surgeon "Weary" Dunlop saved the lives of many P.O.W.s in Japanese camps, with only makeshift instruments. On one occasion he was faced with a British P.O.W. with appalling injuries – loss of a leg, arm, loss of sight etc. The Dutch nurse who was helping Dunlop beseeched him to end his life. Dunlop continued to treat him as best he could and eventually the patient survived. After the end of the war, he returned to the U.K. Some years later he – Bill Smith- visited Australia for a reunion for Weary Dunlop. He had become very successful in business and proceeded to regale the gathering with songs. The story of Bill Smith was recorded in the Herald Sun at the time.

The stories of Molly Meldrum and Bill Smith demonstrate that the proposition that people should be able to fill out their end-of-life wishes is fraught with danger.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Tighe