SUBMISSION CONTENT:

Dear Legal and Social Issues Committee,

In response to the Call for Submissions by the Legal and Social Issues Committee of the Legislative Council of the Victorian Parliament’s Inquiry of ‘End of Life Choices’, I wish to put forward the following:

When considering medical options available at the end of human life, particularly for the terminally ill, the provision of good quality palliative care is one that needs further development and implementation in Victoria.

While euthanasia and assisted suicide are considered by some as options in managing end of life situations, these are not ‘medical options’; deliberately acting to cause the death of a person is not a medical act.

I urge the Committee to examine the impacts of euthanasia and assisted suicide on societies that have legalised them. Of grave concern is the spread of euthanasia beyond the ‘end of life’ to children, babies and dementia patients in Belgium and the Netherlands. Were euthanasia and assisted suicide legalised in Victoria, it is probable that the same would eventually occur here as in these European countries.

The provision of good palliative care is essential for a society that seeks dignity in dying for its citizens. Victoria can be better equipped with palliative care providers in order to give those at the end their life the respect and honour they are worthy of and deserve.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide are not medical options for the end of life, however, palliative care provides medical care and specialised treatment for true dignity in dying.

It must be also clear that within this care, the providing of lethal substances or the promise of a lethal injection is not palliative in the true sense of that medical discipline.
Better than the introduction of euthanasia/assisted suicide should be the funding and development of specialised, high quality palliative care that Victoria could come to be renowned. We need to ensure the terminally ill are respected, valued and treated with care, honour and respect in their last days.

A strong reason not to legalise assisted killing is to protect those who are vulnerable. People at the end of their lives, specifically the terminally ill, are vulnerable to depression, fear and loneliness.

Further, they may feel they are a burden to others, even their family. They may even be subject to the pressure of coercion from family to take the option of euthanasia.

Were assisted suicide or euthanasia introduced into Victoria by law, would a law protecting the terminally ill from being pressured and/or coerced into euthanasia be enacted?

As doctors have a duty of care to support life and heal and care for their patients, the legalisation of euthanasia would see their role dramatically change by becoming equipped to kill their patients. Never has a doctor had this power, but euthanasia would be the catalyst of change in the patient-doctor relationship.

Great efforts made by our government to ensure all Victorians have access to high quality end of life care are needed. Palliative care must be available to all Victorians on an equal basis. Killing of our own people can never be accepted nor sanctioned by our government.

Please consider the welfare of our state and our people at the end of their lives. Recognise that dignity in dying comes from true compassion, love and real care which can be provided though high quality palliative care made available to all.

Yours sincerely,

William Hill

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File1:

File2:

File3: