

Senate Community Affairs Committee

Re Inquiry into Suicide in Australia

I would like to make the following very limited submission re the above issue within what I see to be the TORs.

Article c of the TORs addresses the role of general health services in assisting people at risk of suicide. My submission is that it should be a right of people approaching death or incapacity through serious illness to make personal arrangements with appropriate health services for (1) control over life preserving actions and (2) assisted suicide under circumstances that enable a dignified death as the person determines it. In particular I argue that it is a human right to be in control over the whole of one's life and death; and not be placed in the power of general health services against one's will, simply because of lack of capacity.

My argument is that there is very strong pressure on general health services to maintain life under almost any circumstances and that this action may be despite the strong desires of the affected person.

I first argue that there should be an effective procedure whereby a person can specify in advance of any particular illness that life continuance medical interventions not be pursued under circumstances determined by the person and that this be legally required to be observed by general health services.

I further argue that there are self-administrable drugs available which enable a dignified death for a person approaching a condition of pain or incapacity that is unacceptable to the person. I argue that public opinion is in favour of a reasonable form of euthanasia to be available and that denial of this public policy option to older people encourages an option of early and uncomfortable suicide because of fear of an undesired prolongation of life by general health services when the person has no continuing power over their own lives.

Thank you

Michael Jacobs