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Mr Peter Hallahan
Secretary,
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee

I wish to make the following submission to the Standing Committee Inquiry into the Rights of the Terminally ill (Euthanasia Laws Repeal) Bill 2008

I wholeheartedly agree with the Brown Bill and I urge members to adopt a compassionate attitude and give this Bill support

End of Life Care

My Life, My Death, My Choice

I am a 83 year old world war 2 veteran and it would give me great peace of mind if I could get medical assistance to die in a dignified manner if I should lose quality of life. It is my firm opinion that enforced prolonged life when quality of life is lost is a fate worse than death, I fear degeneration far more than I fear death. It is inhumane to leave those who have lost quality of life, whether it be a terminal illness or deterioration that leaves them confined to a nursing home suffering from dementia, incontinence, and/or Alzheimer's

25/03/2008

Times have changed in my grandparents day there were no nursing homes my parents cared for them at home, the family doctor came each week to check on them and when they lost quality of life, he asked for a family conference and was given permission to ease them out in a dignified manner with analgesics

I would strongly recommend that everyone prepare an Advance Directive and appoint an Enduring Guardian, so that he/she has the authority to liaise with the doctor in the preparation of a health care management plan when quality of life is lost. The health care management plan should provide that you not be subjected to any medical intervention or treatment aimed at prolonging life, and that any distressing symptoms (including any caused by lack of food or fluid) are fully controlled by appropriate analgesic or other treatment, even though this may shorten life. For those wishing to avoid prolonged confinement in a nursing home and distress to loved ones, I would strongly recommend that they take this action whilst they are still of sound mind.

My strong belief in the right of everyone to make a choice for euthanasia should they lose "quality of Life" has been influenced by two family occurrences;

The first a heavy smoker with cancer of the throat, deteriorated quickly, I could hear him gasping for breath as I entered the main hospital entrance, he could not talk, did not recognise anyone and was being fed intravenously, fortunately I was able to persuade a sympathetic doctor to ease him out in a dignified manner

The second a mate who served with me in the second world war had always expressed the wish not to be confined to a nursing home, his doctor put his arm around him one day in my company and said to him "Don't you worry Tom when the time comes I will ease you out" This gave Tom great peace of mind. However the time came when Tom had to go into a nursing home and he was given medication to control him from wandering at night and crying out disturbing other patients, he deteriorated very quickly became incontinent bowels and bladder, was bedridden was unable to communicate and did not recognise anyone. When I approached his doctor for help, he said sorry I cannot do anything for him now as all medication in a nursing home has to be recorded. Tom was allowed to lie in his bed in this state for 15 months, surely you must agree with me that this was an extremely cruel fate to impose upon someone who had served his country with distinction?

Personally I cannot see any point in palliative care for those who have lost quality of life, it only prolongs the agony for the patient and the family, it is in effect slow euthanasia. I wish the right to life campaigners would visit nursing homes and see all those confined to their beds many not aware of anybody or any activity around them, it is cruel you would not wish this on your pet animal.

In conclusion let me make it clear that it is not my intention to impose my views on anyone, however I consider that euthanasia should be an option for those who have documented their wishes in an Advance Directive

Bill Alcock