

## **Joint select committee on end of life choices**

### **Some suggestions for consideration by the committee.**

The need for laws in Western Australia to allow citizens to make informed decisions regarding their own end of life choices is applauded. However, the terms of reference need to be broadened to include the views of articulate seniors who have given serious and considered thought to choices which will most directly affect them in the not too distant future.

End of life choices are not only about pain and terminal illness. The medical model of managing the end of life when experiencing chronic or terminal illness and the role of Palliative care, is an insufficient model for many seniors. The questions of loss of self-autonomy and human dignity; conscious awareness of physical or mental deterioration and the realization that meaningful participation in life has come to an end, are very important considerations for the elderly and should be included in any discussion of end of life choices.

The process of aging brings an increasing awareness of one's own deterioration and detachment from what is perceived as complete life. It is only when this process is directly experienced that it can be fully understood; therefore, it is necessary that those making decisions to change the law take some advice from those who may choose a voluntary and dignified end to their life when they perceive that life to be complete.

Patricia Marshall

Kathleen Trendall

Quotation      Seneca   c.3 BC—--AD   65

I shall not abandon old age, if old age preserves me intact as regards the better part of myself; but if old age begins to shatter my mind and to pull its various faculties to pieces, if it leaves me, not life, but only the breath of life, I shall rush out of the house that is crumbling and tottering. I shall not avoid illness by seeking death, as long as the illness is curable and does not impede my soul. I shall not lay violent hands upon myself just because I am in pain; for death under such circumstances is defeat, but if I find out that the pain must always be endured, I shall, depart, not because of the pain, but because it will be a hinderance to me as regards all my reasons for living.