

**The Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Re Petition No 32- Legislation of a Voluntary Euthanasia Bill**

My name is Pamela Barrett. I am 69.

I'm a 4th generation WA born, healthy, active and law abiding woman.

I'm not a doctor, nor a nurse. I have lost nobody to a war or war related death, but I have experienced the loss of 32 family members and friends.

Nine died suddenly, fourteen of a terminal illness and nine to a hopeless condition.

In 1950 my Gran died of breast cancer. In 1963 my friend aged 23, died of a brain tumour.

In 1978 my husband died suddenly a week after his 38th birthday.

I raised our three children to be law abiding, responsible adults who are in turn raising their five children to be considerate, tolerant, responsible and productive citizens.

Since then I have lost 9 family and friends to a **hopeless illness**.

Alzheimer's disease destroys not only the life of the sufferer but also of their families. My once proud, successful and loving relatives were reduced to a hideous parody of infancy by this illness, and we shared and endured this living death that they were in.

I have lost another 12 family and friends to **terminal illnesses**:-

MND, breast, brain, stomach, pancreatic, bowel, lymphoma and melanoma cancers.

Some died quickly, but many lingered for months with ever decreasing quality of life.

My beautiful, clever and artistic friend was changed by a brain tumour into a nasty and foul-mouthed woman. In moments of clarity, she begged us to help her to die. She died at 45.

Her husband nursed her with love and compassion until her death.

He committed suicide six months later. He was 47.

I was at the bedside of four of my friends as they drew their last tortured breaths.

They were declared 'peaceful' in their drug induced comas for hours, days or weeks.

Experience is a great teacher. Three things I know with absolute certainty.

1. Sudden death causes grief and anguish but time heals, and all our memories are of the love, laughter and good times we shared.
2. Time diminishes but never heals the memories of the pain and suffering endured by our loved ones who died from a hopeless or terminal illness.
3. I never want to subject myself or my family to the suffering and heartache that I have shared and witnessed, caused by both hopeless conditions and terminal illnesses.

For 50 years I have enjoyed the autonomy of adulthood.

For 50 years I have made decisions and have chosen to live a responsible and caring life.

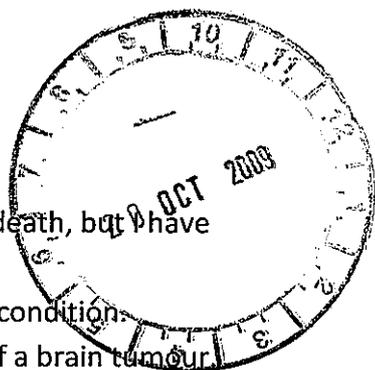
I have a will regarding my possessions.

I have chosen, legally, to humanely end my pets' suffering.

Why then, if I contract a terminal or hopeless condition, does the law demand that I must relinquish my autonomy and decision making to another's belief or authority?

I believe that all mentally competent adults deserve the right to make their own end-of-life decisions and to be able to request and be given assistance to die, **if that is their choice**.

It may be of interest to you that I collected 900 signatures on my initial, but unfortunately non-conforming petition, which was not able to be presented.



PUBLIC

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The Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Re Petition No 32 - Legislation of a Voluntary Euthanasia Bill

Dear Mr Chairman and committee members,

Please note that my petition does not specify **for the rights of the terminally ill** as indicated by your letter 9 Sept 2009.

The Petition says: We, the undersigned residents of Western Australia recognise the need for legislation to allow for Voluntary Euthanasia.

Your petitioners respectfully request the Legislative Council conduct an enquiry into the need for the legalisation of Medically Assisted Voluntary Euthanasia in Western Australia.

The arguments **FOR** this Bill are based on facts:-

- 1: Australia is a secular democracy. We enjoy freedom of speech, religion and of choice.
- 2: Legalised Voluntary Euthanasia offers Equality and Freedom of Choice to All.
- 3: Australia has a rapidly increasing, longer living population -
 - a. '70% of the health budget is spent on the last 6 months of life'
(Dr Mohamed Khadra, Weekend Australian Magazine, 2007)
 - b. 'Within two decades the cost of health and residential aged-care spending to cost a staggering 1% of GDP' (The West 1/9/09)
 - c. Consistent polling shows an 80% majority of public support for pro-choice.
- 3: Data from countries where assisted dying is legal, shows that not only has there been no abuse of the system, but also that people who are deemed eligible for such assistance are living longer secure in the knowledge that they have the autonomy and the right to choose when 'enough is enough.' Many granted this assurance never return to use the facility.
- 4: Social inequality. Only a privileged few have access to drugs which will ensure them of a sure and peaceful death, if they so choose.
- 5: Judicial anomalies. It is illegal to assist hopelessly or terminally ill people to end their suffering and also illegal not to end an animal's suffering.
- 6: Prohibition. Just as illegal abortion led to backyard operations, profiteering and the criminalisation of unwed mothers (N.B. not the fathers) so too is the illegality of assisted dying forcing the seriously ill, their loved ones and the elderly into considering criminal acts.

The arguments **AGAINST** such a Bill are based on beliefs and assumptions:-

- 1: Emotive. Talk of 'slippery slopes' and Tony Abbott's "bumping off the grannies"
- 2: Religious. Monotheistic beliefs in 'God's will' and the 'sanctity of life' are selective.
As I write, many, in the name of God, are prepared to kill and be killed.
- 3: Political. The non-elected and undue influence of the Church.
- 4: Medical. The Hippocratic Oath 'To first do no harm' fails to address the harm that is caused when the medical profession intervenes to save or prolong lives that are so badly damaged that the lives they save are then condemned to a life of permanent infancy, dependent on the 24/7 care of others for every necessity to maintain that life.

I believe that having the right to choose a medically assisted death to end one's unrelievable agony is a human rights issue and I beg you to consider my submission in that light.

MS PAMELA BARRETT

P. Barrett 15/10/09