

Item of business :

# End of Life Choice Bill

Submission name :

## Mrs Raewyn Blair

### Comments

Already younger generations are unaware of the value of life for an older person, if it is not very apparent that they value life. For this reason alone a person can feel vulnerable, and therefore be more easily coerced into being killed rather than be considered a burden on society.

We had my mother-in-law come to stay with us when she knew she had just a few months to live. This bill would have short circuited those last few weeks, she didn't want to be a burden, but it was a time of great love for us all. Yes the whole family put ourselves out to have her there, but it was an enrichment, a deepening understanding of life, and I found it a privilege. In a country where death is hidden away people endeavour not to face or think about it. This is unhealthy for all.

Years later I was with both my parents during their dying and deaths. Some time earlier I asked my father "wouldn't you rather be dead Dad than like this?" He answered "While you've got it, Raewyn, life is sweet". In different circumstances, with this bill in place, that discussion might not take place, or through communication difficulties the outcome could be very different. I have been present at a number of family deaths and it is very easy to see or feel the vulnerability an ill or old person feels, even if they don't express it.

However, people now live very busy lives, and may find the elderly or ill family members in the last few years, months or weeks of their life a bit of a nuisance. It may appear that the older or ill person has no joy or purpose in life, and is therefore just a burden. That vulnerable person could be persuaded to believe they were too great a burden and should accept, what was once called mercy killing. Mercy for whom?

Briefly, the Hospice movement. Meet the families who have experienced hospice assistance in the deaths of family members or friends. This is where energy and money could be spent to enhance the experience of dying. This is what brings dignity to the end of life. This enriching experience for all deepens our understanding of life and death.

We should not ask doctors who are dedicated to life and healing, to take on killing as part of their work.

### Recommendations

Please do not pass this bill, look at providing more hospices to assist the ill and dying and their families.