

Item of business :

# End of Life Choice Bill

Submission name :

## Dr Jack Haywood

Over the last ten years I have spent six of them studying medicine at university and now four years practicing as a doctor in a variety of medical specialties. As a student we weighed the principles of bioethics, and took the Hippocratic Oath which has seen little change for centuries. As a doctor I have had the privilege of caring for people in immense suffering and seeing people of all ages and identities struggle with physical pain and mental illness. I have seen patients recover from places of immense suffering to enjoy and achieve great things. I have also seen young New Zealanders with so much future potential take their own lives and have lifted a 20-something year old girl up by her legs to take the weight off the noose that was holding her blue head.

I find it truly astonishing that our country is considering legalising euthanasia and to me it is a very scary and sad prospect.

I believe there are many clear arguments as to why euthanasia should not be legalised in New Zealand, some of which I have included below:

There has been much public concern and energy within the health sector to address the high youth suicide rate in this nation. Legalising euthanasia delivers a message to our youth (and adults of all ages) that the ultimate treatment for unbearable suffering is suicide. The legalisation of euthanasia in other countries has led to an increase in suicide rates amongst youth. Legalising euthanasia sends the wrong message to young New Zealanders; it flies in the face of the efforts and energies of so many kiwis who are helping those suffering with depression.

The elderly in New Zealand are an ever growing group of vulnerable individuals. Many elderly people are isolated and research shows it is common for them to feel they are a burden on their family. Legalising euthanasia does not address a key issue of empowering our older New Zealanders to live well but instead encourages feelings of guilt for being a burden on their family. We should be protecting these isolated, vulnerable, suffering individuals in our society, celebrating and empowering them, rather than sending a message that their lives are of less value and should be ended. This applies even more to those living with chronic mental or physical disability.

Thirdly, I am greatly concerned how the legalisation of euthanasia will impact doctors and other health professionals across the country. The great majority of New Zealand doctors are opposed to this bill, evidenced by the New Zealand Medical Association's position statement. The legalisation of euthanasia would disregard the opinion of a large, trusted, essential profession and require it to facilitate the very thing it is opposed to. We are blessed to have a largely excellent health service in New Zealand full of hard working professionals whom would be devalued by the introduction of euthanasia law. None would be impacted as greatly as the palliative care and hospice services which are already understaffed and underfunded for the essential and excellent services they provide.

I am currently on a rural medical training programme and am committed to working in and serving rural New Zealand communities. Rural healthcare requires generalism and the provision

of a broader range of health services than our specialist urban colleagues need to provide. It is my passion that, where possible, rural and provincial kiwis should be able to obtain excellent healthcare without having to travel to the city. The legalisation of this bill would put further pressure on rural health professionals where certain communities may not have healthcare providers willing to provide euthanasia to patients requesting it. It may make it even more difficult than it currently is to fill vacancies in rural medical positions if a pro-euthanasia doctor is preferred.

Other countries have shown us that euthanasia cannot be regulated heavily enough to mitigate the ill-effects it will bring about. Please, please, please guard Pacific's triple star and vote against the legalisation of euthanasia in this beautiful country.

Dr Jack Haywood