

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
P O Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

I wish to make a personal submission to the enquiry into the effects of suicide.

I will confine my remarks to the term of reference related to the impact on the Australian community and the social effects of suicide. Although the committee is directed to consider the effects especially in the areas of indigenous and youth suicide I wish to point out that other sections of the community are also involved and should be considered.

I am a rational male individual of 80 years of age. I am aware and grateful that I have a legal right to commit suicide. I am also conscious of the fact that I may wish to exercise that right should my health deteriorate to a point where I am no longer able to enjoy a quality of life that will allow me to die with dignity or continue to live peacefully. I wish to avoid the obligation to experience, unnecessarily, the pain, suffering and humiliation associated with a long terminal illness.

Unfortunately, as things stand at the moment in the absence of some legally-available, easily-administered drug such as Nembutal, I will probably be forced to take that step prematurely if I wish to maintain control of my end point. The methods available to me are messy and require a degree of physical activity which will no longer be available if my fitness declines and other close companions are not permitted to assist. I do not want the decision about my end point to be passed by default into the hands of some medical practitioner who will sit in judgement about when to apply euthanasia by slowly upping the dosage.

A committee such as yours has an opportunity to recommend that for the many people in my position it should be legal for a physician, on request, to prescribe a drug that could be taken or administered, when desired by the individual most closely concerned, in order to terminate that individual's life in a peaceful and dignified way.

Yours sincerely
Dr M E March