

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2017

The Victorian Government's Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill - a Recipe for Disaster

With much fanfare the Victorian Health Minister launched the so-called Voluntary Assisted Dying bill in the Legislative Assembly on Thurs 21/9/17. The title of the bill is dishonest. We all benefit from assistance in dying when our time to die has come.

Good assistance in dying comes from helping a person to live, even when they are dying. The government's bill is in reality designed to give doctors the power to accede to a person's request to end their life.

It's an Assisted Suicide bill!

"The bill establishes a mechanism for adults with decision-making capacity, who are suffering from a serious and incurable condition at the end of their life, to be provided with assistance to die in certain circumstances, by means of self-administering a lethal dose of medication*" and...

"Under the bill, only adults with an incurable, advanced, progressive, disease, illness or medical condition that is expected to cause death within 12 months and is causing suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner that is tolerable to the person will be able to access voluntary assisted dying*".

What is not recognised is that a person with a disease which can be made terminal by rejection of treatment, eg diabetes, heart disease, Parkinson's, kidney disease, motor neurone disease etc. will be able to make herself/himself eligible for suicide assistance from the doctor.

"A person with a mental illness alone or a disability alone will not satisfy the eligibility criteria; however, a person with a mental illness or a disability who meets all the eligibility criteria will have the same opportunity as anyone else to request and be assessed for voluntary assisted dying*".

This section appears to open the door to suicide for those with mental illness and for disability if they have - as well - an illness for which they reject treatment so becoming terminal. It may well be the mental illness or the disability could be the motivating factor in seeking suicide and the companion illness for which the patient can refuse treatment may not be the real problem for the patient!

Much is made of the importance of the request for suicide being made solely by the patient. A doctor or family member or caregiver must not request it or suggest it to the patient. How would that be policed - occurring as it would in the privacy of the home?

(Continued on Page 5)

*Statement of Compatibility-Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006-Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017

Letter from the President I never thought it would come to this!



- Margaret Tighe

Dear Friends of life,

I have just returned from a depressing visit to the Victorian Parliament with my colleague Mary Collier where we witnessed the Victorian Minister for Health, Jill Hennessy MLA introducing the so-called Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017.

I say the so-called Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017 because in reality it is a

bill allowing physician-assisted suicide.

Health Minister Hennessy made much of the so-called "safeguards" contained in the bill. The bottom line is that as experience from those few countries that allow assisted suicide shows "the safeguards" are not worth the paper they are written on.

It was quite depressing watching the Minister for Health (!!!) lining up in Queens' Hall for a triumphant photo with her supporters.

However, it's not over till it's over and we simply **MUST** keep on working away until the bill is finally debated on 17, 18, and 19 October 2017. If you are able to attend the debate in Vic Parliament on one of these dates, we encourage you to do so.

We rely on you to keep up the pressure on your MPs. At this stage, if letters appear too onerous, just make that phone call to your MP's office.

We are focussing on the House of Assembly MPs, where the bill has been introduced. It is imperative that the bill is defeated in this house. This means that if you can only make JUST ONE PHONE CALL this is the one to make! Victorians: If you are unsure of the name of your MP please telephone us on (03) 9385 0100.

In life, Margaret Tighe, PRESIDENT

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Three Foundational Points in the Euthanasia Debate

Excerpt from article in *The Australian* 1/10/16

PAUL KELLY - EDITOR-AT-LARGE

....."There are three foundational points in this debate.....

First, in relative terms the proportion of people dying in acute pain is declining because palliative care methods have been enhanced. There is wide agreement among experts that most physical pain at life's end can now be managed – this is a critical trend but cannot conceal the fact painful deaths still exist and become the main argument for legal change. But euthanasia should not be seen as a substitute for palliative care—that would be a medical and moral blunder.

Second, where euthanasia is legalised the record is clear—its availability generates rapid and ever expanding use and wider legal boundaries. Its rate and practice quickly exceeds the small number of cases based on the original criteria of unacceptable pain – witness Belgium, The Netherlands, Switzerland and Oregon. In Belgium, figures for sanctioned killings and assisted suicide rose from 235 in 2003 to 2012 by last year. In the Netherlands they rose from 2331 in 2008 to 5516 last year.

These figures come from Labor MLC Daniel Mulino's minority report in the recent Victorian parliament committee report recommending euthanasia. His conclusion is that "the negative consequences arising from legislation far outweighs the benefits arising in that minority of cases".

Experience in other jurisdictions leads to the unambiguous conclusion: the threshold event is the original legalising of euthanasia. After this there is only one debate – it is over when and how to expand the sanctioned killings. Claims made in Victoria that strict safeguards will be implemented and sustained are simply untenable and defy the lived overseas experience as well as political reality. There are many questions. If you sanction killing for end-of-life pain relief, how can you deny this right to people in pain who aren't dying? If you give this right to adults, how can you deny this right to children? If you give this right to people in physical pain, how can you deny this right to people with mental illness? If you give this right to people with mental illness, how can you deny this right to people who are exhausted with life?

Third, culture and values will change to justify the death process. Consider the situation of one of Belgium's most famous doctors, Wim Distelmans, applauded as a human rights champion. Having killed more than 100 patients, he is a celebrity, gives talks around the nation and is lauded as a man who "cannot stand injustice". He told *Der Spiegel* that giving a lethal injection is an act of "unconditional love".....

Euthanasia debate at Monash Health

Recently Margaret Tighe participated in a debate at Monash Health (Hospital) on the Victorian Government's Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill. Her main opponent was Leslie Vick of Dying with Dignity. Also participating was Associate Professor Leeroy Williams, Palliative Medicine Specialist.



The debate was organised by the 2017 Williamson Leadership Victoria Programme. Mary Collier accompanied Margaret Tighe and made some very useful contacts at the end of the debate.



In Shocking Vote, British Doctors Endorse Legalising Unlimited Abortions Up to Birth

LifeNews.com STEVEN ERTELT SEP 22, 2017, WASHINGTON, DC (excerpt)

In a shocking vote today, the Royal College of Gynaecologists (RCOG) voted to endorse legalising unlimited abortions up to birth.

The RCOG's General Council voted to support the removal of all criminal sanctions associated with abortion in the UK. Only 33 council members were allowed to vote on this important issue, despite the RCOG having 14,000 members, fellows and associates.

Currently abortion on demand is only legal in Britain up to 24 weeks and late-term abortions on unborn babies after that point are limited. The vote endorses opening up abortion throughout pregnancy for any reason.

Leading pro-life campaigners in Britain were upset by the vote. Clara Campbell of the pro-life group Life told *LifeNews*: "It is shocking that a mere handful of RCOG representatives have decided such a crucial RCOG policy, while their vast membership were not given a vote. If the measures voted through were to be implemented, and all legal sanctions associated with abortion were removed, there would be no law stopping abortion up to the 7 month of pregnancy, and potentially up to birth if the Infant Life Preservation Act was scrapped also."



CANADA

Canadian doctors refuse treatment, let man die of bladder infection

SHAWVILLE, Quebec, September 13, 2017 (*LifeSiteNews*) – A Quebec woman filed a complaint with provincial authorities alleging doctors at the region's only hospital refused to treat her husband's bladder infection because he had cancer.

Herman Morin had a prognosis of more than a year to live and would have begun chemotherapy this month, Mary Lucille Durocher told *LifeSiteNews*.

But Morin, 65, died five days after he was admitted to Shawville Hospital, according to the complaint Durocher filed July 31 to the Service Quality and Complaints Commissioner (CISSS) of Outaouais.

Dr. Stanislav Drachek told Durocher they would not treat Morin's bladder infection because "they knew that Herman had cancer in the bone and it was spreading to the liver," she says in the document.

The doctor told her was "better to let him die from the infection in a week or 10 days than to allow him to live for a year or more and suffer in the final stages from the cancer," alleged Durocher.

But that was "definitely not mine or Herman's wishes and we very clearly indicated this to the doctor," she wrote.

"Herman's greatest wish was to survive another year in order to watch his daughters graduate from college and university!"

CANADA

Canadian Province Will Fund Free Abortions

LifeNews.com MICAH BILGER SEP 22, 2017 OTTAWA, CANADA

Another Canadian province just made it easier for women to abort their unborn babies.

Nova Scotia will begin forcing taxpayers to fund abortion drugs so women can receive them for free through their health plans, according to Canadian Press.

Beginning in November, women with a valid health card will be able to obtain the abortion drugs for free at their local pharmacy with a prescription, *Global News Canada* reports.

The announcement Friday by the Nova Scotia government comes not long after several other provinces also said they would offer the abortion drugs for free. New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec and Ontario government officials approved the deadly abortion drugs to be offered for free through their taxpayer-funded health care programs.

USA

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USA

Major US doctors group opposes physician-assisted suicide

BioEdge - by Michael Cook | 23 Sep 2017

The American College of Physicians, the second-largest physician group in the United States with 152,000 members, has declared that physician-assisted suicide is unethical.

The ACP takes a forthright stand with supporting appendices covering most of the arguments for and against physician-assisted suicide (PAS). Its conclusion is: The ACP does not support the legalization of physician-assisted suicide, the practice of which raises ethical, clinical, and other concerns. The ACP and its members, including those who might lawfully participate in the practice, should ensure that all patients can rely on high-quality care through to the end of life, with prevention or relief of suffering insofar as possible, a commitment to human dignity and management of pain and other symptoms, and support for families. Physicians and patients must continue to search together for answers to the challenges posed by living with serious illness before death.

USA

Pro-Life Speaker Ben Shapiro Answers Pro-Abortion Student's Question With an "Epic Takedown"

LifeNews.com MICAH BILGER SEP 15, 2017

Popular conservative author and speaker Ben Shapiro continued to impress his audience Thursday at UC Berkeley when he rapidly refuted a young man's abortion arguments.

Shapiro's speech at the liberal California university drew massive media attention because of the violent protests that have broken out on campus during past conservative speakers' talks. The university and local police increased security, and several people were arrested Thursday.

Inside the sold-out auditorium, Shapiro received a

huge applause when he quickly destroyed a young man's arguments in favour of first-trimester abortions. A video of the exchange received a lot of attention Friday, and some described Shapiro's argument as an "epic takedown" of abortion.

During the question and answer period Thursday, a young man asked Shapiro why he believes abortion is wrong.

"Why do you think a first-trimester foetus has human value?" the young man asked, explaining that he believes sentience is what makes humans valuable.

"Ok, so when you're asleep, can I stab you?" Shapiro asked. The young man said no.

"Ok, if you are in a coma from which you may awake, can I stab you?" Shapiro continued.

Again, the young man said no. "But that's still potential sentience!" he added.

"Do you know what else has potential sentience? Being a foetus," Shapiro said, followed by a massive applause. Conservatives and pro-life advocates on the internet applauded, too, on Friday with tweets and other messages of support.

BELGIUM

Showdown looms over euthanasia in Belgian psychiatric hospital group

30 August 2017 | by Tom Heneghan, *the Tablet* (excerpt)

Belgium's Brothers of Charity may have to sever ties with their 15 psychiatric hospitals if their lay-dominated board of directors defies an order by Pope Francis to revoke a decision to allow euthanasia on the premises. Rome gave the order's Belgian chapter an ultimatum last month to do so by the end of August. In a terse statement noting "possible measures by the Vatican", the chapter said it would review the decision.

The board's next meeting is scheduled for 11 September, the order's global head Brother René Stockman told the Italian Catholic daily *Avenire*. He was confident the three brothers on the board would follow "the Magisterium of the Church" but not sure the 11 lay directors would also agree.

Former European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, one of the lay directors, cast doubt on Stockman's preferred outcome with a tweet in mid-August that said: "The time of 'Roma locuta, causa finita' is long past". Stockman, who is also Belgian, condemned the chapter's decision soon after it was announced in late April.

Euthanasia has been legal in Belgium since 2002. The board decided to allow it, even for people not in the terminal stage of illness, out of respect for the autonomy of patients who no longer want to live. Stockman said the decision relativised the Church's absolute respect for life and showed Belgium was so secularised that "certain points of Church doctrine are unjustly considered almost outmoded".

"It's almost fashionable today to take leave of one's life with a glass of champagne in one's hand," he told the Belgian daily.