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My name is Anthea Patterson and I am happy for my views to be made known or referred to.

A key concern with this bill is vulnerable people and the inability to safeguard them adequately with this bill.

The elderly, the sick, the depressed, those living with disability are vulnerable. They may feel pressured to “not be a burden” and to therefore have their lives prematurely terminated. I also gravely fear that this legislation will open the door to elder abuse.

One of the key findings of the 1998 Tasmanian House of Assembly inquiry into euthanasia was that “The committee found that the legalisation of voluntary euthanasia would pose a serious threat to the more vulnerable members of society and that the obligation of the state to protect all of its members equally outweighs the individual's freedom to choose voluntary euthanasia.” There are insufficient safeguards to ensure these members are protected.

I acknowledge there are some safeguards in this bill however, as Professor Lowenthal and Professor Harris (a medical oncologist) state: It is impossible to create a system that permits suicide for some but that with “robust” safeguards can guarantee the protection of the vulnerable. PAS/E, of course, also sends the wrong message to people contemplating suicide and undermines suicide prevention efforts. The main safeguard is the assessment by two doctors whose assessments are never independently checked. Those who are sympathetic to PAS/E can widely interpreted eligibility criteria especially over time. If capital punishment is rejected after court cases where innocent people can die, how much more fraught is this? How many errors might occur?

It seems contradictory that we are spending millions of dollars to prevent suicide, providing medical assistance and support for those suffering depression and yet with this legislation, it is proposed to not just condone but assist someone who considers their life worthless.

Thank you for your consideration.

Anthea Patterson