

**From:** Sarah Loft  
**To:** [VAD Review Secretariat](#)  
**Subject:** Written submission for the End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill 2020 (the VAD Bill)  
**Date:** Sunday, 3 January 2021 5:07:51 PM

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To the UTAS VAD review panel,

I am writing to express my serious concerns regarding the proposed Voluntary Assisted Dying Laws. I have a number of questions I hope you will give due consideration to and hope you will fully consider the implications of the proposed laws.

**How do we (if it is at all possible) keep these laws static?** The sad reality is, that in countries where these rules have been introduced, more inclusions continue to be added. In less than 20 years the Netherlands has already expanded their rules to include people over 70 who are 'tired of living'<sup>3</sup>, infants under 12 months and children over 12 years with parental consent, and are currently adding terminally ill children between 1-12 to their ever growing list of eligible people.<sup>4</sup>

**We say 'do no harm' but have we fully considered the potential for harm to our Doctors if they are forced to refer, and participate in assisted dying?** I believe there is real mental and emotional harm that could be done to our Doctors. **How do we prevent a crisis of Doctors leaving the profession to avoid being placed in situations that go against their ethics and hippocratic oath?**

**How do we prevent these laws creating a suicide culture?** In Australia, organisations such as Beyond Blue, Lifeline and many others have done so much work trying to prevent suicide, yet in countries where these laws have been introduced it is not uncommon for the suicide rate to increased.<sup>1, 2</sup>

**How do we protect those in our family and community who live with mental health and disability?** This is the group of people I am most concerned about with these proposed laws. **What message does it send when we say 'because you have this or that condition you are eligible for voluntary assisted dying'?** **What message does it send when health care providers, friends or family ask 'have you considered assisted dying'?** **How susceptible are they to believe they are not wanted, or are better off dead?**

One of the biggest arguments I have seen presented is that people don't want to suffer intolerably or they don't want others to suffer. I think it is worth considering that our generation with all it's advances in medical and palliative care, arguably has the least to complain about. **Also worth considering, is our palliative care really that inadequate?** That is certainly not the story I have personally seen or heard from doctors, nurses and those that have supported loved ones through it. The second part of this is argument is fear. **How much of this argument is related to 'fear of suffering'?** **Is fear a tool we should be embracing when making life and death decisions?**

**In order to keep things voluntary, I would like to know how all parties involved prevent coercion and peer-pressure (both spoken and unspoken)?** Children who want their inheritance sooner, family who want the convenience of an earlier funeral so they can get back to their important work, people who believe it must be the best option because 'my doctor suggested it'. While these may not be the most common scenarios, they are all very real possibilities. In fact in Belgium and the Netherlands, there are many reports of involuntary euthanasia.<sup>3</sup> **Do we turn our back and ignore that it could happen? Do we say that it isn't our problem (that is until it happens to be**

**us on the receiving end)?**

My hope is that we can learn from the mistakes of others so we are not destined to make the same mistakes and the host of negative consequences that follow. I wish to make it clear that I can not and do not support these proposed laws.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Loft

West Launceston, Tasmania

greentreefrog@ymail.com

1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5499219/>
2. <http://stopassistedsuicidemd.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Assisted-Suicide-Affect-Rates-of-Suicide.pdf>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3070710/>
4. <https://www.christian.org.uk/news/netherlands-approves-euthanasia-for-under-12s/>