

- **SMH Letters to Editor 17/1/17**

Baird and Foley both need a reality check. People just don't say goodbye, close their eyes and stop breathing. There is a process called the "dying process" and it has again taken the people at the coalface, the nurses, to point it out. Unlike the Australian Medical Association who are as far removed from that process as possible. Good palliative care is delivered by nurses and good palliative care inevitability, in trying to effectively control pain, makes the patient semi-conscious, incoherent and incontinent. Rarely dignified.

It is time that there was a clear separation of church and state and politicians voted for what the majority of their constituents want.

Cathy Davitt Waverley

With the strong possibility now of a debate on voluntary euthanasia in the NSW Parliament, I suggest an advocacy group called "Equal Rights for Humans" be formed to air their views to members of Parliament ("NSW to debate law on voluntary euthanasia", January 16). People can be charged with cruelty for allowing animals to suffer, so why should the same laws not apply to those who deny the right of voluntary euthanasia to humans who are suffering?

Sandra Burke North Sydney

I find the AMA's position on voluntary euthanasia baffling. It is very unlikely the proposed bill will oppose the AMA policy that palliative care is the appropriate treatment for terminal illness in the "vast majority" of cases. It is surely the unfortunate minority who do not find relief from palliative care that the legislation is intended to address. If a patient is beyond the help of the medical profession, why would its association oppose a dignified end to their suffering?

James Buckman Enmore

Premier Mike Baird and Opposition Leader Luke Foley will not support the proposed bill. What right have they to oppose it? They are both relatively young and healthy. Will they feel the same when they are otherwise.

John Torpy Dural

Andrew Denton is right ("The theocracy hidden inside our democracy", January 16). Confused medieval religious beliefs also nobble education, same-sex marriage and especially our inhumane refugee and immigration policy. We are about 50 per cent secular. We need to go all the way and remove religion's warped influence on our public life. No religion in schools, no prayers before Parliament, no swearing on Bibles or Korans etc. To create a society that is fair and unified we need to become a fully secular, multicultural democracy. All religions and beliefs welcome, none favoured and all operating under the one set of laws. No exceptions.

Phil Bradshaw Naremburn

I completely agree with the comments of Andrew Denton about those denying us the right to have assisted dying legislation. Only, when he talks of a "theocracy" I would substitute the term "control freaks". We did not ask to come into this world, and then for most of our human life, we are being told by others how we should conduct ourselves. So surely we should have the right to exit the world as we see fit.

Jim Banks Pottsville Beach

It is obvious from Luke Foley's comments that he has not a clue who assisted dying legislation is meant for. It is a choice to end the sufferings of those who are in a living hell. It is certainly not meant to discard the elderly.

Sally Kling Newport

- **SMH Letters to Editor 18/1/17**

Forget the word euthanasia – just consider if any person advocates forcing some people to have an agonising death, bereft of all dignity. Should that not be condemned as torture? In a democracy we should regard such a barbaric situation as illegal.

At 90 I have learnt that truth is many faceted – but on this issue too much unnecessary human pain is at stake to take a minority's right to prolong it.

Ed Raftery Davistown

- **SMH Letters to Editor 19/1/17**

Euthanasia: Safeguards can minimise risk of abuse

Julie Morgan's reasons for opposing voluntary euthanasia do not withstand scrutiny ("Euthanasia debate a real worry", January 17).

The first argument appears to be that assisted voluntary euthanasia should not be allowed because we do not allow murder nor do we apply the death penalty. It merely has to be stated to reveal its weakness.

The second argument relies on a distortion of the proposal, namely that it involves allowing a group of experts to determine who should die. The proposal is that a terminally ill individual of sound mind is free to decide to end their own life with assistance.

The decision is up to the individual and the role of the experts is to safeguard.

The third argument is that any system of voluntary euthanasia may be open to abuse. The experience of those countries that have legalised voluntary euthanasia shows that it is possible to legislate safeguards that minimise abuse.

Maurice Gonsalves Elizabeth Bay

My husband, who died last year, had an incurable, aggressive cancer. Having been a medical practitioner for more than 40 years, he knew what was in store for him. When he could neither eat nor drink and he was in acute distress, he wanted the choice not to live.

The people who make laws in this country have not shown mercy. He was of sound mind until his death and I am left with a burning memory of his distress.

Beverley Silverton Mona Vale

Well said, Ed Rafferty (Letters, Jan 18). Reading the nay-sayer letters on euthanasia, you would think we were some archaic criminal society bent on killing off half the population.

Why would you allow doctors every day to make decisions on treatments to keep you alive and not trust them to be ethical in decisions about dying?

When my time comes, I ask to be afforded the right to choose. While I hope I don't need euthanasia for palliative care, I also don't want to exist when I can no longer wipe my backside or feed myself.

Mine would be to opt out in my own home, still in control of my bodily functions surrounded by my wonderful family, the GP and a bit of medication.

That's dying with dignity. Instead this debate is forcing me and many others to contemplate over-dosing on prescribed medication.

Elizabeth Kroon Randwick

I conclude from Paul Davies statement that he's alarmed by the comparisons of animal and human euthanasia by advocates, that he has not had a pet (Letters, January 18). I can't think of a better analogy than man's best friend when applying love and compassion in the final hours of life. Those who have enjoyed the love and company of a pet realise how hard parting can be but how much more intolerable is allowing a sentient being to suffer."

Packing your best mate off to the vet knowing it's the last time you will ever see each other isn't an exercise of convenience but of compassion.

There is nothing compassionate about prolonging the journey to death through pain and suffering when you love somebody or something enough to put their welfare above your own sensibilities. Then you are dispensing love not death.

Christopher Woodley Vaucluse