

Doctors Opposed to Euthanasia

MEDIA RELEASE

Advance Care Directives Bill in SA Parliament could allow ‘backdoor’ euthanasia

The group Doctors Opposed to Euthanasia is urging members of the SA Upper House to amend the Advance Care Directives Bill due to be debated during the next parliamentary sitting commencing on the 5th of February.

The bill passed through to House of Assembly late last year.

DOE spokesperson, Dr Timothy Kleinig says that, while DOE applauds the broad intent of the Bill - to allow patients to make explicit their wishes regarding medical treatment - ‘backdoor’ euthanasia may be permitted as an unintended consequence of the Advance Care Directives Bill.

“The Bill as it currently stands allows patients to force health practitioners to intentionally cause death by dehydration and malnutrition, if decision-making capacity is lost,” said Dr Kleinig. “Even worse, the Bill allows relatives to make this decision on a patient’s behalf.”

This potential application of the Bill would violate the consciences of most health practitioners. Provision of food and drink via mouth is not medical treatment. “We and other health professionals are obliged to offer these to all of our patients regardless of their mental capacity, and the Bill must be reworked to reflect this.”

An example of what could occur:

A patient has an ACD advising no nutrition or hydration in the event of lost capacity. The patient is admitted with a mild stroke which causing a receptive dysphasia (loss of comprehension) - a neurological deficit which is often (but not always) temporary. The patient is completely unimpaired in all other respects, but has lost 'capacity'. Doctors and nursing staff are compelled to dehydrate/starve the patient to death, even though the patient appears to want to eat/drink.

Letter to MLCs from DOE is attached.

For further information please contact Dr Kleinig on

ENDS

Per email