



Media statement

18 October 2018

New Zealand Aged Care Association strongly opposes End of Life Choice Bill

NZACA Chief Executive Simon Wallace, speaking to Parliament's Justice Select Committee today, says assisted dying goes against the values and existence of the aged residential care sector.

"Our job is to care for many of our most vulnerable elderly people and that is what we are funded to do. We are wholeheartedly committed to the health and wellbeing of our residents. The people who come to us are often sick and frail. Our skilled and empathetic staff provide them care, enjoying the trust of residents and helping make the last stages of life as comfortable and rewarding as they can possibly be.

"Not only does an assisted death contradict these values and undermine the training and established clinical protocol of care but exposes an already vulnerable sector of our society to even greater vulnerabilities."

Mr Wallace says around 10,000 New Zealanders a year die in aged residential care facilities, which is around a third of those that die each year. Based on current patterns, this is going to reach the point where most people over 85 will die in residential homes after an extended period of care.

"This means our aged care providers will not only need to care for a much greater number of older people, but a greater number with co-morbidities. And potentially, a higher prevalence of dementia which is a particularly vexatious and complex issue when it comes to choosing end of life.

"Ultimately, assisted dying would add significant complexities to the work of our sector and distract from the real focus of quality care.

"Through Association meetings all around the country over the past 12 months, my members have continued to express their deep concerns and fervent opposition to this Bill.

"No legislative safeguards can protect against wrongful deaths of vulnerable people. If this Bill is adopted, then rest homes will seek to be excluded from such a law*. Indeed, the Bill completely fails to specify where assisted dying would take place".

“We remain strongly opposed to this legislation. Rather than legalising assisted dying, we advocate for reforms that strengthen our sector’s ability to provide end of life and palliative care, ensuring equitable access and remedying the shortages in our workforce so we can do our job in providing care to the highest possible standard.”

ENDS

Contact: Simon Wallace on 04 473 3159 or 0274 882850

* refer point 5. New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) SUBMISSION ON THE END OF LIFE CHOICE BILL, 6 March 2018 - link <https://bit.ly/2ykn04D>

About the NZACA

The NZACA is the peak membership body that represents the interests of more than 90% of the country’s 38,000 rest home beds. Its membership is diverse and includes for-profit, not for profit, religious, welfare and trust run organisations, as well as rest homes based in rural, provincial and urban locations.