

Tasmania: The Dire Possibilities

There are a number of characteristics that make a society worthy to be called “civilised.” I’m sure people argue about them. But it seems beyond doubt that we can all agree on this:



A civilised society protects its young and cares for its sick and elderly.

Yes? The weak are protected. The infirm are assisted. We do not cast out or reject the disabled or unwanted. We do not walk away from those who are emotionally or physically destitute.

We simply don't.

But some want us to. In Tasmania there are, in particular, two career politicians (leaders of their parties no less) who for some reason conflate progressive politics with measures that are commensurate with the advancement of savagery and the desolation of the weak. And they then rampage through the dictionary to daub words like “freedom” and “compassion” over their small-minded and hard-hearted legislative impositions.

There is no reasoning with these people; these two in particular. They do not converse. They do not dialogue. They do not even debate. They draw arbitrary lines around the rhetorical scope of their latest rendition of self-righteousness so as to declare matters of principle irrelevant; and receive advice about technicalities as a consultative feint.

It infuriates me. It disgusts me. As a Tasmanian I am utterly offended by the imposition of such an injurious path by one of the least electorally mandated governments of all time. Yes, they are the government, they are validly and constitutionally empowered (until the next election); but a little bit of humility, please!

The latest embrace of savagery is the introduction of legislation for the provision of euthanasia. Despite the fact that places that have implemented euthanasia have seen significant increases in the breadth and depth of its application... Despite the fact that there is no way you can involve the state in the killing of its citizens without removing protection from and discriminating against at least some portion of society (as inquiry after inquiry has shown)...

Despite the fact that it is abhorrent for the state to implicitly but directly promulgate the view that for some, "your life is not worth living..." Despite the deepest roots of common sense and compassionate humanity... these political leaders want to take away our human right to have a government that will never ever kill us – *even* and *especially* for those of us who reach a point where life doesn't seem to be worth living.

These are political leaders who have overseen an increase in the pain and suffering and hopelessness of those waiting to be cared for by an underfunded and decrepit hospital system... now allowing pain and suffering and hopelessness to be eligibility criteria for medically prescribed killing.

Abhorrent. Savage.

I know I'm ranting. But here's why. I am currently reading the euphemistically named *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2013* and I'm realising something: My wife would have an "eligible medical condition" under the legislation. She has Crohn's Disease and associated autoimmune disorders. It is "incurable and irreversible", it is a "progressive medical condition"

that causes “persistent and not relievable suffering” that can be characterised as “intolerable for the person.” It is “advanced” in that it requires significantly more medicinal intervention than previously and there is “no reasonable prospect of a permanent improvement.”

If this legislation passes – yes there would be a bureaucratic process, and yes there would likely (hopefully) be a bunch of really good medical professionals to get in the way – there would be no *absolute* barrier between her and a lethal injection.

But that’s not the real problem.

If this legislation passes my government will treat my wife and I differently. If I were to become depressed and suicidal, *everything* would be done to ensure my safety and my recovery. If she were to become depressed and suicidal, *less* would be done for her.

Lara, Nick, at its very heart, in its very principle, irrespective of your proposed bureaucratic protections, your proposal mistreats my family. Not just my larger Tasmanian family, but the ones who are very close to me.

It’s not something I’m likely to forget. Ever.