

Good morning everyone

I am pleased we in the ACT, will, in November next year, have access to Voluntary Assisted Dying. Many people think this is the answer to avoiding the possibility of a horrible and protracted death but they do not realise that very few will be eligible to access this law.

One of the conditions of the ACT law is that you must be of sound mind - have decision making capacity, during the whole process - from the time you first ask for VAD to the time you take the lethal substance. This is in addition to meeting all the other conditions.

Dementia is the leading cause of death in Australia and one in four of us is going to be affected by dementia, and therefore not eligible for VAD under the new ACT legislation as we are not of sound mind. This means that many who wish to access VAD are not going to be able to.

I am horrified at the possibility of wasting my life, and money (I want my money to go to family or some worthy institutions) and losing my independence and dignity in an aged care facility with dementia or some other debilitating illness.

I have seen my father and the relatives of friends do this and to me it would represent intolerable suffering. Death from dementia is often a very slow and distressing process. Accounts in the media from persons with dementia, and from their family carers, have abounded recently. And their experiences are tragic.

I hope that enough people are concerned with this very real prospect of a horrible end of life to persuade the ACT Government to make provision in the legislation for an Advance Care Directive for dementia, to be completed when we do have decision making capacity, and enabling us to access VAD should we lose such capacity.

I want the right to choose a good, death.

If that is not available, I hope I have the courage to take my own life, as I plan to do.