



Media Release

For Immediate release

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ACT euthanasia attack on Disability Rights Commissioner “desperate”

In their haste to prove that ‘choice’ to kill oneself means only what they want it to mean, and to nobble the Disability Rights Commissioner’s (DRC) opposition, the ACT party has tied itself into knots. Wendi Wicks, spokesperson for Not Dead Yet Aotearoa, an advocacy network of disabled people opposed to euthanasia says furious ACT reaction is “dirty work at the crossroads”.

ACT’s deputy leader Brook Van Velden fired up, following a TV segment on Monday with DRC Paula Tesoriero about the End of Life Choice (euthanasia) act. Van Velden said the Commissioner misrepresented the act’s safeguards, that disabled people are at risk from this piece of legislation. But Wendi Wicks says “Given that she was extremely influential in steering the bill through Parliament as an ACT employee, it’s unsurprising that she so protective of her version of choice as a political candidate”.

What is surprising though is the range of Van Velen’s errors. Her television interview on Tuesday where she says international disability rights advocacy groups agree there is no risk to disabled people is false and foolish*. She grossly misrepresents what was said to a disabled Canadian man pressuring him to chose MaiD, as his public record excerpts show. And she frames the risk to disabled people as their choice, which is codswallop- choice should be about reasonable/realistic alternatives, such as support to live well, not euthanasia because that’s all the choice there is or the pressure is too great.

There’s also the attempt to take out influential disabled people who oppose euthanasia. The ACT media release of Monday claims the Disability Commissioner is a public servant who should be neutral. It claims opposition voiced by the Commissioner is, in effect, “screwing the scrum”. However the actual role of the DRC is to advocate for disability rights, and the Human Rights Commission is named as an independent Crown Entity in Part 3 of the Crown Entities Act 2004 and directly responsible to the Minister of Justice, not the State Services Commissioner.

NDYA regards this error-ridden attempt to discredit any disabled people's opposition to this badly written law as unscrupulous electioneering. We are more inclined to listen to the well-informed of the legally-qualified Disability Rights Commissioner appointed by the Crown than to desperate errors and the misconceptions of a political party aiming at votes.

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* International Disability Rights Advocacy Groups Opposed to Euthanasia include:

Toujours Vivant-Not Dead Yet Canada

Council of Canadians with Disabilities

Not Dead Yet USA

ADAPT(USA)

Second Thoughts (state groups include Maine new Hampshire and Connecticut)

National Council of Independent Living

Not Dead Yet UK

Sisters of Frida

British Council of Disabled People

SCOPE

Live On

HOPE Ireland

Hope Australia

Lives Worth Living

Euthanasia Exposed (RSA)