

United Free Church of Scotland

Church & Society Committee

Stage 1 consideration of the Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill

1. Do you agree with the general purpose of the Bill to make it permissible, in the circumstances provided for, to assist another to commit suicide?
We are completely opposed to this Bill as we believe it is fatally flawed in that it robs the vulnerable and the frail in our society of the protection that they need at the end of their life.
2. Do you have any views on how the provisions in this Bill compare with those from the previous End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill?
We are appalled that both Bills involve Doctors to prescribe drugs which will kill another human being. This is in direct contradiction to the Hippocratic Oath that they have taken. Two of the statements in the Oath that are relevant to this Bill are;
 - *“I will use treatments for the benefit of the ill in accordance with my ability and my judgement, but from what is to their harm and injustice I will keep them”*
 - *“And I will not give a drug that is deadly to anyone if asked, nor will I suggest the way to such a counsel”*
3. The Bill precludes any criminal and civil liability for those providing assistance, providing the processes and requirements set out in the Bill have been adhered to. Do you wish to make any comment on this?
We respectfully suggest that whatever the processes and requirements set out in the Bill providing assistance to another to commit suicide should remain a criminal offence.
4. The Bill outlines a three stage declaration and request process that would be required to be followed by an individual seeking assisted suicide. Do you have any comment on the process being proposed?
Whatever processes are being proposed they cannot be safely regulated by Government legislation. Where assisted suicide is practised i.e. Oregon in the USA and Holland, the number of assisted suicides continues to rise each year whereas we would have expected that the numbers would have plateaued.
5. Do you have any comment on the provisions requiring that the person seeking assisted suicide must have a terminal or life-shortening illness, or a progressive condition which is either terminal or life-shortening?
Whatever condition the person seeking assisted suicide suffers from, it is likely that modern palliative care can ensure a significant reduction in pain to allow a dignified end to life.
6. Are you satisfied with the eligibility requirements as regards age, capacity, and connection with Scotland as set out in the Bill?
This Bill has removed the requirement for a psychiatric evaluation which may result in people with depression seeking to end their life unnecessarily. In our opinion this is a significant flaw in this Bill.
7. Do you have any comment on the roles of medical practitioners and pharmacists as provided for in the Bill?

Pharmacists will have to stock and dispense chemicals that are extremely poisonous to those seeking assisted suicide. This is contrary to their normal practice in that what they usually dispense are drugs which treat a variety of conditions to relieve suffering.

The attempted involvement of General Practitioners in this process is morally unacceptable as they have taken an oath to heal rather than kill people. Their College in a survey of its members this year made a clear statement that the majority of their members remained completely opposed to any change in the law on assisted suicide.

8. Do you have any comment on the means by which a person would be permitted to end his/her life under the Bill?

It is always sad whenever a human being is prepared to end their life by whatever means. The means is really irrelevant as they will kill themselves. In Scotland the Government has been campaigning to reduce suicides yet this legislation may have the opposite effect of increasing the rate of suicides. This would be an anomalous situation if the Scottish Government supports this Bill.

9. Do you have any comment on the role of licensed facilitators as provided for in the Bill?

This is a terrible burden to place on anyone, to help another human being end their life.

10. Do you have any comment on the role of the police as provided for in the Bill?

The role of the police in a civilised society is to protect people and prevent killing but this legislation asks them to condone the ending of life.

11. Do you have any comment to make about the Bill not already covered in your answers to the questions above.

We believe that this legislation sets a dangerous precedent in that if legalised would become a routine procedure to end life which has both state and society's approval. This is a step too far in that it could easily become an established part of medical and clinical practice. We as a Church remain completely opposed to this legislation.

The previous Bill in 2010 was rejected by the Scottish Parliament as being inherently unsafe. Nothing has changed with respect to the Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill as it is also unsafe. We hope that the Scottish Parliamentarians will reject this proposed legislation and if it is rejected we would suggest that a moratorium of at least a decade be placed on any such legislation being introduced to the Scottish Parliament in the future.

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