

A Message from Peter Hammond

16th April, 2008

Good afternoon, my name is Mieke Hammond. My husband Peter has Motor Neuron Disease and is gradually wasting away. Since his speech is deteriorating, he asked me to say a few words on his behalf.

“Once upon a time”

From my terminal perspective, now it seems that life in the wellbeing seat was almost a fairy tale. Nevertheless, there are some wonderful memories of being very active. I cannot complain.

My symptoms first showed their ugly head maybe 3 years ago. And like anyone else with Motor Neuron Disease, it has been significantly progressive. I was officially diagnosed in February, 2007; I cried and got angry all at the same time.

Accepting the circumstances, I quickly came to terms with it. My biggest fear at that time was that I would be completely disabled and lose control over my life. My mother at age 60, had a major stroke. After realizing her disabling condition, I thought at the time that physician assisted dying would have been appropriate for her. Unfortunately she went on to live for another 8 years of strokes and dementia.

Therefore, we researched on the internet for help on physician assisted dying. Dying With Dignity Victoria responded and has been supporting us ever since.

My circumstances are almost intolerable. I cannot communicate verbally, I have dizzy spells, my eyesight is affected. Recently I had a fall resulting in abrasions and bruising. My feet are numb from the paralyzes, I have choking spells and difficulty with swallowing and chewing. My hand muscles have been wasted away, I have great difficulty with writing or even holding a cup. Regardless of these circumstances, there is still a deep fear of death.

I have a ventilator at night in order to sleep. During the day I also have difficulty breathing. The use of the ventilator will soon be a day and night necessity.

I have no prospect but to deteriorate further. At some stage, my conditions will become quite intolerable. I have sought and obtained medical and palliative care advice. I have thought very carefully through the options and have discussed the issues with my loved ones. My decision on that basis for myself is that I would feel incredibly relieved to have the option of a physician assisted peaceful death at some stage, though I am not at that stage yet.

Whether or not you believe that all or some roads lead to Mecca and you're deeply influenced by that, the fact remains that to release anyone from a state of extreme pain, suffering and complete disability, the choice of physician assisted dying surely is an act of significant release, blessing and healing.

So let's get on with it!!

Peter Hammond—Warragul