

**Te Hui Amorangi ki te Upoko o te Ika Submission to the Justice Select
Committee:
End of Life Choice Bill
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We would like to make an oral submission.

Tena koutou nga mema o te Justice Select Committee

This submission is made on behalf of Te Hui Amorangi ki te Upoko o te Ika. Our Amorangi is one of five Tikanga Maori Amorangi that make up the Tikanga Maori membership, Te Pihopatanga o Aotearoa, within the 3-Tikanga Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

This submission was prepared from korero at a Te Hui Amorangi ki te Upoko o te Ika hui held on Friday 16th February in Otaki. The large majority of our Amorangi represented at this Amorangi hui, are **against** the proposed End of Life Choice Bill introduced to the House by David Seymour. It was the agreement at this Te Hui Amorangi ki te Upoko o te Ika hui that this submission would be written to **recommend no change be made** in the existing law.

Reasons for opposing the End of Life Choice Bill

Maori Tikanga

This korero is from a Pakeha Tikanga and has been forced on us. This is not our Tikanga. This is also a reason why there is 'silence,' or 'limited' or 'no comment' from Maori on this Bill. This is why we thought it important to have this korero within our Amorangi because we need to enter this discussion from a Tikanga Maori perspective. If this Bill is passed by Government, this decision has the potential to impact on all our whanau, hapu and iwi in the future.

This 'choice,' this 'decision,' this 'right to choose,' for Maori does not operate in a vacuum. The impact of this type of decision affects not only whanau, but hapu and iwi. Any decision affecting a whanau member, needs to incorporate all whanau in making the decision. As whanau, we are also answerable to our Atua, our Tupuna, and our people for any decisions we make that impact on all those we whakapapa to. We are also answerable to our mokopuna and future generations. What we decide now impacts on the present, but also the past and the future.

Our role as whanau is to strengthen and enable our whanau. We prolong life as long as we can. So we stick with our whanau for as long as they are here with us. Whanau are our living taonga. Our tikanga is to prize and honour life.

Respect for human dignity is important for us as Maori. Human dignity is about all whanau, hapu and iwi taking care of all those they whakapapa to. Whanau and all the loved ones of a person who is in the process of passing from this world into the next, will always be right beside their loved one for 24 hours a day, caring for any need, including karakia, himene and waiata, mirimiri and rongoa, and providing loving tenderness and touch. Whanau will often take shifts in caring for their loved one right up until they pass, and will continue this care and attention right up until they are interred in their whanau urupa or cemetery, or cremated. They are never left alone. This time is a special and sacred time for whanau.

This time of life has an immediate and lasting impact on all those who are assisting in the care of a loved one, and in the process of preparing and assisting their loved one for passing. This is an expected and natural role for all whanau to do for their loved ones – it is a whanau responsibility of care and aroha.

There are Tikanga Maori processes that need to be completed before someone passes, and when they are close to death. This transitions the way for our loved ones to pass. The signs (tohu wairua) are there when someone is close to passing. When it is time, there will be signs that indicate that our loved one is close and ready to pass. We cannot stop it. This happens in God's time.

The 'tuku' karakia is commonly conducted immediately following death. 'Tuku' is a traditional Maori protocol to transition and release one's wairua to the next world, to our ancestors, and our Atua - Tukua kia haere, tukua kia rere.

'Choice'

Having the 'choice' to end one's life, and the principle of 'individual rights,' come from a Western perspective and focus on the individual and not on whanau. This perspective and focus does not consider Maori Tikanga. This is not our tikanga. It's never been in our thoughts and it's never been in our dialect.

We are also in agreement with the Inter-Church Bioethics Council (ICBC) submission to the Justice Select Committee, where they say in their submission: "Of great significance, the current discussion is largely a rationalist Pakeha conversation. Many cultures in New Zealand other than the majority Pakeha culture have traditional ways of managing death and dying in family/whanau settings. Our conversations and research identify that euthanasia/assisted suicide has no equivalent in language or practice in Māori and Pacific people practices. Therefore, the current debate risks imposing on New Zealand culture a largely individualistic worldview without adequately considering other perspectives. Within Māori and Polynesian communities, euthanasia/assisted suicide is not part of everyday reality or something readily discussed. For many Māori the tribal custom of karanga aituā means that talk about death will 'call it down', which could further limit discussing the issue of euthanasia/assisted

suicide. However, the Bill now brings this issue into the open for us all, and the result of this Bill may affect any one of our whānau. That is why there is a call for Māori and Polynesian families to discuss this Bill, and its impacts on whānau, hapu and iwi. As Tess Moeke-Maxwell and colleagues state, ‘the dying and their whānau are proactive in doing whatever they can to ensure a high quality of life is achieved to enable the individual to live for as long as possible and as comfortably as possible’ – ‘They do not give in easily to death.’”¹

Our Faith

Within our Biblical faith, the focus for us all as whanau, hapu and iwi is on preserving, prolonging, safeguarding and respecting the sanctity of life, and not taking life. We are all God’s DNA. God has given us life, and it is he who takes it away when our time is at an end on this earth, not us.

God is the giver of life. “My times are in your hands” (Psalm 31: 15).

Having a strong faith as we do in Haahi Mihinare, the Anglican Church, we can get through any hardships and challenges in life, along with the love of our whanau in life and in Christ.

General concerns

Amorangi members were concerned that if this Bill was passed by Government and brought into law, that the medical staff who are authorised to assist a person to die, will be going against the Hippocratic Oath that they signed on becoming a medical professional. The impact on medical personnel who carry out assisted medical suicide for a patient, could result in negatively affecting their own wellbeing – spiritual, physical and emotional.

Generally, mental health issues impacting on whanau health and wellbeing are enormous and varied (eg. historical and intergenerational trauma). Concern has been expressed by our Amorangi that those within our whanau who are experiencing and are affected by mental health issues are vulnerable. Their ability to determine what is ‘intolerable’ and what is ‘unbearable suffering’ may be affected.

Concern has also been expressed by our Amorangi in regards to what is meant by ‘unbearable suffering’ and what is ‘tolerable.’ The measurement of ‘unbearable suffering’ and ‘tolerance’ in terms of pain (whether physical, emotional or spiritual) is not universal. We know within our own life experiences, whanau, hapu and iwi, that there is a difference in the threshold of pain for males and females. What is ‘tolerable’ and what is ‘intolerable’ is also dependant on context and each particular persons situation. For example,

¹ Tess Moeke-Maxwell, Linda Waimarie Nikora and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. “Māori End-Of-Life Journeys”. In Human Development: family, place, culture 2nd ed, W Drewery and L Bird Claiborne eds.. North Ryde: McGraw- Hill Education, 2014. pp. 382-383. & Tess Moeke-Maxwell et al., “End-of -Life Care and Māori Whānau Resilience”. p. 145.

anecdotally and statistically Maori males are more likely to commit suicide than females.

Concern has also been expressed by our Amorangi that this Bill, if passed, gives too much power to the medical fraternity, who often hold a very different worldview from us as Maori.

Conclusion

Thank you for this opportunity to share some of our korero on the End of Life Choice Bill. As mentioned, the large majority of our Amorangi represented at this Amorangi hui held on Friday 16th February 2018, are **against** the proposed End of Life Choice Bill introduced to the House by David Seymour. It was the agreement at this Te Hui Amorangi ki te Upoko o te Ika hui that this submission would be written to **recommend no change be made** in the existing law.

We would appreciate the opportunity to make an oral submission also, where we could elaborate on our reasons for not supporting the proposed End of Life Choice Bill.

E te Ariki, nau nei matou I karanga ki au mahi.
Meatia kia hikoi matou I mua I tou aroaro,
whakaungia mai tou aroha ki o matou ngakau,
 tou pono ki o matou hinengaro,
 tou marohirohi ki o matou whakaaro,
 mo te taenga ki te tino tauranga,
ka mohio pu ki te hari, kua tau ki te haukainga,
 ki te taanga manawa I roto I a koe,
I roto hoki I to matou Ariki, I a Ihu Karaiti.
 Amine.

Lord, you have called us to serve you.
Grant that we may walk in your presence:
 your love in our hearts,
 your truth in our minds,
 your strength in our wills;
until, at the end of our journey,
we know the joy of our homecoming
and the welcome of your embrace,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Amen.²

² The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. (1989). A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa. Genesis Publications, Christchurch, NZ. pp. 414-415.