

An overview of what I intend to present to the committee.

My wife Vicky Janssens, died on the 21st of April this year, by availing of assisted dying in Belgium. The decision to travel to her home country of Belgium. Was reached after enduring , Terrible constant and unrelievable pain

From Vicky's stage four terminal cancer.

Although we received the most excellent care in the oncology services available in Cork. No relief could be found to alleviate Vicky's suffering from her illness. I do not have the words to attempt to describe the pain that she endured in the last months of her life. It was that pain that drove her, to attempt to end her own Life by suicide, in February of this year.

These were not the actions of an individual whose thoughts had become destabilised by pain and fear. rather the well conceived, well thought out, and rational actions of a person who could not endure Her suffering.

This plan, to my knowledge was put in place, in advance of Vicky's attempt on her own life in February.

On Vicky's discharge from hospital, and subsequent return home she revealed to me, that she had already put such a train of events in motion. This included having had consultations via social media, with the presiding doctor in Belgium, and associated travel and accommodation arrangements. I became aware of this plan. When it was presented to me, that Vicky intended to travel to Belgium, and it now was a matter of whether I would accompany her. or whether it will be one of her closest and lifelong friends. Needless to say this was a shocking revelation.

One from which the consequences still have an impact on my daily life. I put it to you thus, how could I not accompany my wife, on this final leg of the journey. Therefore we travelled to Belgium in mid April Of this year.

Physically speaking, Vicky was in no fit state to travel. At this stage, she could not eat, could only drink a little. And was subsequently weekned by her illness. We travelled alone, and with the exception of daily visits from Vicky's grieving parents, we spent the entire time in Belgium by ourselves , attempting to come to terms with what was to happen on the 21st of April. We were without friends, family and a support network at this time. I have to say that I found this experience particularly harrowing.

It was not the imminent end of my wife's life, but the shocking isolation of being alone through this ordeal.

The procedure itself. The ending of Vicky's life by medical means.

Took place in her friends house, on Friday The 21st of April at 2 pm. It was, was incredibly dignified, respectful, and most importantly pain-free.

Not only was it pain-free.

It marked an end to the incredible pain that Vicky was suffering. A definite end point to that pain Had medically assisted dying, being available in this country. Much if not all of the associated isolation and trauma would've been alleviated for us. Vicky's friends, All healthy and well thankfully, along with Vicky's parents. Would have been able to travel here, at no great inconvenience to themselves. Vicky Could've died, in the country that you now considered her home. Surrounded by the said same, Family and friends that she loved so dearly. This option was denied to us.

I am in No way advocating that this decision, that we faced, should be the norm. Nor should it be coerced upon people who do not wish it so.

Our lives are a precious, yet fleeting snapshot of consciousness. I have no doubt, that joy can be found in the darkest of situations. And in the gravest of illnesses.

However this is my contestation. Of the thousands of people that die each year from illnesses such as cancer. Palliative pain relief does not work in each case. Subsequently these people, like my wife, die in unspeakable pain, or at best medically induced unconsciousness, until their body's is finally fail.

I would ask you therefore committee members. To take this into consideration, when coming to your conclusions at the end of these discussions.

