

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF DEBBIE PURDY'S LANDMARK CASE

Tuesday 30th July 2019

Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
102 Pretty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Dear Sir,

We represent a diverse range of perspectives from across British society, including those who have accompanied loved ones abroad for an assisted death. We all agree that the right to choose how we die is a fundamental human right, and that those who are either terminally ill or facing incurable suffering should have the option of a peaceful, painless, and dignified death.

It is ten years since Debbie Purdy's successful legal case, requiring the Director of Public Prosecutions to clarify when a person who accompanies a loved one to Switzerland can expect to face prosecution under the Suicide Act 1961. At the time, only two people a month travelled from the UK to Switzerland to end their life – research from the UK's Assisted Dying Coalition reveals that now more than one person a week makes that journey. In light of those growing numbers, and of their friends and families grappling with the heart-wrenching decision between either letting their loved ones suffer or accompanying them and risking prosecution, we urge that action be taken to change the law.

In the years since the judgment in Debbie Purdy's case, new evidence has emerged from progressive countries, including Canada, that robust safeguards can be achieved whilst protecting autonomy. Prominent medical opinion has shifted and an overwhelming 88% of the public have said that they favour assisted dying for those who are incurably suffering, in at least some situations.

Parliament has yet to consider legislation which would have allowed the late Debbie Purdy and Tony Nicklinson the right to control the manner and timing of their own death. Paul Lamb and Phil Newby are now taking up the baton.

Ten years ago Debbie Purdy took the first steps in our country's journey towards a compassionate change in the law, many cannot wait any longer. The time for the law to change is now.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Julian Baggini
Sir Iain Chalmers
Andrew Copson
Jean Farrer
Robert Farrer
Professor A.C Grayling
Penny Hall
Dr Phil Hammond
Rev'd Canon Rosie Harper
Virginia Ironside
Dr Michael Irwin
Professor Emily Jackson

Paul Lamb
Miriam Margolyes
Dr Henry Marsh
Stephen Mason
Rev'd Scott McKenna
Trevor Moore
Phil Newby
Lauren Nicklinson
Jane Nicklinson
Sarah Ninian
Professor David Nutt
Dave Osmond

Omar Puente
Teddy Prout
Lord Martin Rees
Andi Reiss
Ann Rennie
Professor Wendy Savage
Kris Sorbie
Tooran Gholikhani
Polly Toynbee
David Ure