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Media Release

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It's Never OK to Attempt to Kill Your Mother

A lack of quality, palliative care cannot be used as a reason to kill people.

The jury which convicted Ian Crutchley of attempting to end his mother's life, yet called for a compassionate sentence is an example of thoughtful people being placed in an intolerable position. They found from the evidence presented, that an attempt had clearly been made on the life of an elderly, infirm and vulnerable woman, which is quite rightly, a criminal act.

What is less clear is what should be done about it. The decision of Justice Patrick Keane to sentence Mr Crutchley to six months' community detention and 150 hours of community work is a compassionate one. What it is not, is a rationale to justify killing those whose sufferings we cannot bear to witness.

Justice Keane's decision might be used to illustrate that the need for well funded, quality palliative care for the terminally ill, is upon us. The nation's newspapers regularly acknowledge the extraordinary work of those in the Hospice movement, whose staff and volunteers enable people to have a dignified, natural death.

The issues which emerge at the end of a person's life are often complicated and to allow someone to come to terms with death, to draw towards them those things that truly matter and to let go of those which don't, is an honourable act.

We know a lot about good palliative care and the way in which often, deeply divisive issues are finally reconciled or profound emotions are conveyed in the simplest of gestures.

We like to think that as a nation, we are compassionate, resourceful and optimistic. We are sorry for Mr Crutchley. Neither he nor his family had the support they needed at a critical, and sadly inevitable, time. This does not mean, however, that he or anyone else, would be right to act as he did. It is, quite frankly, never OK to try to kill your mother.

ENDS

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